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Adventure

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Adventure

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Cover by Hubert Rogers

Headings by I. B. Hazelton, Neil O'Keeffe, Amos Sewell

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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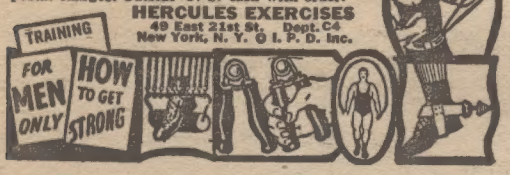

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BIRD SPEEDS

by Davis Quinn

BIRDS have been estimated to fly at tremendous speeds. As recent as 1895 a trained ornithologist placed the air pace of even small birds at 180 to 240 miles per hour! 150-mile-an-hour ducks, so veteran wildfowlers told us, uncannily sped ahead of their best placed shots. Not a bad alibi, at that—until somebody went to the trouble of checking it with an air speed indicator. They found that the supposedly fastest ducks, teal, made only 68 miles, and that the heavier canvasbacks clocked 72 flat. Chased by aeroplane as they were, these birds undoubtedly put every ounce in it. Their normal cruising speed is in the forties.

There is of course a good deal of variation in all species, as there is in horses and humans. Falconers have noticed this in partridges, where one bird will fly a sixth faster than all others when the covey is pursued by a hawk. On this theory some canvasback might top 72, but so far that is where the record for duck speed stands. Well, seventy-two miles per hour is not such a shabby alibi for a luckless gunner after all!

The majority of birds fly at nowhere near this rate. In fact, the maximum pace of the average bird is below the stalling speed of an aeroplane, so other means must be used to check them—an automobile speedometer, railroad train, theodolite, or a stopwatch over a measured distance. Representative maximum records in this class are: pelican, 26; great blue heron, 28; red-tailed hawk, 22; ruffed grouse, 22; quail, 48; herring gull, 36; barn swallow, 46 (appears faster because of its twisting and turning); starling, 44; house sparrow, 33. The crow has been clocked at 60.

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Most birds have a cruising speed which they can accelerate when hunting or when being hunted. Ducks, for example, can increase their normal rate by one-third. Geese, heavier birds, accelerate hardly at all.

Size and shape of wings are often important to speed. Short wings beat faster than long ones, which usually means more speed. That is why the heavier canvasbacks outdistance teal, although as every wildfowler knows, teal are much faster on the rise from the water and getaway. But where different *types* of birds are involved, wing specifications of opposite extremes may afford parallel speeds. Our common hummingbird, which is believed to stroke 200 wingbeats per second, negotiates 55 m.p.h. without strain. This diminutive creature covers 600 miles nonstop from the Atlantic coast to Bermuda, and 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico. The albatross, of famed fourteen-foot wingspread, flies about one beat to the second at 49 miles per hour.

The turkey vulture supports four pounds of body weight under a seventy-inch wing-spread, whereas the loon, weighing more than eight pounds, has only fifty-five inches of wing expanse. The loon cannot take off from land and in fact needs a long stretch of water plus a headwind to lift its heavy bulk into the air. But once off, its air velocity is tremendous. Compare this with the familiar lazy twenty-mile-an-hour-flight of the turkey vulture.

The speeds quoted herein relate as nearly as possible to "air speeds—" that is, of progress through the air without consideration of wind. If help or hindrance of wind be considered, the product is known as "ground speed;" another way of saying distance covered in the air as measured by two points on the ground. Ground speeds are unreliable

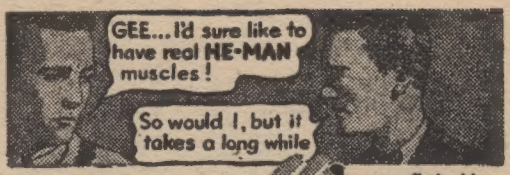
because the wind element complicates them, and they are naturally hard to compare with air speeds.

UNDOUBTEDLY many high speed records of bird flight are made with help of wind, but this influence has been much exaggerated and is apparently not at all in direct proportion to the velocity of the wind. Interesting, along this line, is an observation of pelicans flying south, fourteen miles per hour, behind a negligible northeast breeze. When this rose to a gale, their ground speed increased to sixteen miles, and when later the wind blew at 50 m.p.h., their speed was only 22 miles.

Birds do not like to fly with the wind. Like an aeroplane, they need the "lift" of a wind under their wings from the front to keep them up. With the wind directly behind they must fly very fast for the air to grab hold, or else flounder without control. For this reason birds choose to head into a wind or at least quarter it.

Slanting downward from a height, a bird can naturally increase its speed almost to the limit of air resistance, just like an automobile coasting in neutral down a long hill. In falconry this is called "stooping." The duck hawk is recorded, by stopwatch and also by air speed indicator, to stoop at 180 m.p.h. Another report, on good authority, states that while an aviator dived at 175 m.p.h., one of these hawks passed his plane "like it was standing still," to strike one of the ducks!

A differently constructed flying mechanism, but ranking with the peregrine in speed, is the swift—well named. A species of this family was clocked by stopwatch and measured distance at 200 miles per hour. The flight of the swift is said to be distinguished by the singular technique of alternate wing strokes. This rather widely accepted belief among ornithologists may someday be proved by high speed photography.



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SIX FEET AND HORSE-FACED

A novelette

By CADDO CAMERON

"YOU better be-have yo'self," said Skyline Jackson to his horse Cloudbust as he came to a halt at the Castroville Crossing of the Medina River, opposite Bandera. "What I mean, we ain't a-prizin' up no ruckuses in this here town."

Pressed for time, Skyline and Cloudbust had headed north out of San Antonio. Upon topping the first hill that got in their way, they sighted another, higher and more heavily timbered, which looked good under the circumstances.

And so on—hill after hill, with a little circling and back-tracking now and then—until they jogged peacefully into Bandera and ran smack into a dark-eyed girl, and a shepherd dog, and trouble.

The lanky, red-headed rider let his horse stop to drink in the clear mountain stream. The opposite bank rose in an easy slope, and at its top a portion of the town could be seen. He examined it closely—a bit cautiously, if the truth were known. Everything he saw looked good to Skyline, and a pleased expression made its way across his long, freckled face.

"Cloudy, you wuthless old scamp," he drawled softly, "I betcha yonder's the town we been lookin' for all these years."

The tall roan lifted its head and sighed in a way that announced his approval of Bandera's water supply, to say the least.

Skyline's lively blue eyes took note of the pecan, oak, cypress, hackberry, and other timber that grew luxuriantly up and down the river.

"H'ist 'em!" barked the tall man. "Reach!"

He grinned slowly and informed Cloudbust, "All them green things and birds shore do make a fella feel right peaceable, sorta like settlin' down. More'n likely I'll refawm and never tech another drop of liquor. And I wouldn't be surprised if I git me a job in that there sawmill down yonder, and quit riskin' life and limb a-gentlin' wild beasts like you."

Cloudbust took another drink on that.

The tall horseman thoughtfully regarded a long frame building with verandas on its first and second floors, which occupied the crest of the slope on the left side of the street. "Duffy Hotel. Mmmm-huh. Betcha they're good feeders, and me all-fired hungry."

On the opposite side of the street stood a large rock structure. He observed that it was the Carmichael and Hay store, and wasn't particularly interested. But immediately behind the store he discovered a smaller building that had all the earmarks of a saloon.

Skyline Jackson straightened in his saddle. "Git along, you old crowbait. You done had yo' drink and here I set, jest a-dyin' of thirst. Git along!"

Cloudbust went shuffling up the slope through thick white dust that clung to his wet hide.

"Looks sorta like alkali, but it ain't," mused the loose-jointed rider, reluctant to think anything unfavorable of the town that had taken his fancy. "Betcha it's limestone. She's good dust."

AT THE top of the rise, the trail widened and changed its name to Main Street. It was a placid looking street, and Skyline Jackson figured he fitted perfectly into such surroundings. Fact of the matter was, he had hidden his belts and guns in the thin roll behind his saddle

upon first sighting the town. Therefore he now looked serenely to right and left, grinning innocently at everything and everybody in general.

The racks were lined with wagons, buggies, and saddle horses; a number of men were holding down chairs on the hotel verandas, and folks were coming and going or lounging in front of the C&H Store.

Everybody appeared to be right sociable and neighborly, so the big horseman's grin widened a trifle.

One of the first things he saw was a girl. She came out of the store, and at her heels trotted a little four-legged something with long hair—it looked like a dog. Behind it came a tall man with a mighty good-looking face, even if it was pretty dark, dressed in fancy clothes and a couple of guns. But at the moment, T. C. Jackson didn't see much of anything other than the girl, for she was tall and slim, a-packin' heaps of coal-black hair and the fetchingest smile he ever saw on a human face.

It didn't make a particle of difference to Skyline whether she was smiling at him. She was looking at him and that was plenty. He simply couldn't make the devil in him behave, so he swept off his hat.

"Howdy, Miss Black-eyes," he said. "You-all got you a mighty fine town here, no foolin'."

Had he been watching, he might have seen a number of the spectators sort of catch hold and hang on as if they expected an explosion to shake things up. However, these danger signals escaped him; but he did see the girl's eyes widen momentarily, then narrow devilishly.

And he heard her say, "Lady, go fetch him!"

In a twinkling his interest switched from the girl to the four-legged something with hair. It suddenly assumed the shape of a little shepherd dog, and it darted from the porch into the street without a sound.

IN THE course of his wanderings up and down the cow country, Skyline had seen heeling dogs—"heelers" they were called, and they could make the wildest horse or cow go where it didn't want to go—but in all probability Cloudbust had never encountered one of the beasts. Therefore when something nipped him low on his near hind leg, it must have struck him as a painful surprise. And when he lashed out viciously and his shod hoof damaged nothing but thin mountain air, no one could rightly blame the big roan for being more or less put out. Very likely he saw Lady flatten in the dust like a badger the instant after she snagged his hide, causing him to miss her by a foot at least. Before he had a chance to change ends or even to bat an eye, that streak of canine lightning burnt him on the off leg. Another murderous kick brought no results, so Cloudbust lost his temper. Then Lady's sharp teeth again cut the hide on his near leg and Cloudbust went into action, behaving as if he figured the only thing to do was to keep all four feet in the air at once.

Lady backed off a short distance. She crouched in the dust with her sharp little nose on her paws and a foxy look on her face, watching the fun.

Cloudbust knew a lot of tricks, some of which had been taught him by his proud master; and when pitching just for fun, he was plenty good enough to sun the moccasins of anyone other than the most expert rider. In moments of youthful exuberance, especially when he had an audience, Skyline sometimes invited the tall roan to start something. It was a game with them, all in the spirit of fun, and they invariably put on a good show. Moreover, being no shrinking violet by nature, this struck him as being a first-rate chance to introduce himself to Bandera and her citizens, so he gave Cloudbust his head and raised the long yell.

His Winchester rode stock foremost beneath his left leg. With the way Cloudbust was carrying on, it constituted something of a menace, since it might fly up and crack him in the jaw. He whipped it out and tossed it to the nearest man, a bony old fellow leaning against a porch post in front of the store.

The old-timer caught the rifle and called out, "Want me to shoot that daggoned hoss befo' he piles you?"

Skyline was too busy to frame a fitting retort.

Having ridden Cloudbust his first saddle and owned him ever since, he was thoroughly acquainted with the horse's routine tricks. On the back of this fiery roan, he could put up a ride fit to delight the eye of an admirer of finished horsemanship, and he did it without the aid of any circus stuff.

Skyline Jackson was one of those rare riders who made a mean bucker look easy. He simply climbed into the saddle and stayed there regardless. with no flourishes or plays to the gallery. He loved horses and wouldn't think of cutting one to pieces with spurs and quirt in order to break its spirit, no matter how bad it might be. He always swore it ought to be a fair tussle between horse and man, no holds barred as far as the horse was concerned, and sometimes declared he really wasn't entitled to the advantage a saddle gave him. Cloudbust was his slave, but Cloudbust was a horse with a temper, and now he was all-fired mad.

Much to Skyline's delight, he went through his routine paces with a little more than his usual vigor. Off and on, the freckled rider caught a glimpse of the admiring faces that lined the street on either hand, some of them women and girls. He liked that. Above the creak of leather and the pounding of hooves arose a rebel yell—music to his ears. He mentally thanked the old-timer who had his rifle.

Suddenly Cloudbust spun around in the cloud of dust he had kicked up, reared, and plunged down upon the spot where Lady was supposed to be. But she wasn't there. She simply melted away.

The big horse stopped pitching, tossed his head, and snorted like a buffalo bull. He looked angrily about him. Evidently his temper was cooling off and he decided to think the matter over. Then Lady shot through the dust and slashed his hide again.

Cloudbust exploded!

The old-timer flourished the Winchester over his head. He let out another yell, then roared, "Hold yo' aprons, gals, if you wanta ketch a cowboy, 'cause one of 'em is a-goin' up high and a-comin' down hard!"

AT THE first jump, Skyline Jackson knew he'd better get fixed to do some riding. Neither that frenzied squeal nor that peculiar, spine-wrenching twist were on Cloudbust's regular program of tricks. He set his teeth. Damn that dog! But he didn't blame the horse for getting his dander up. He'd let him rip things apart to ease his feelings, and he'd stay in the middle of the big rascal in spite of hell.

Well fed and in fine condition, Cloudbust turned all of his tremendous vitality loose in a magnificent burst of rage. He broke all bucking-horse traditions. He invented new figures in this bucker's dance, and he originated contortions that came near to shedding everything but his hair. He made as much noise as a small stampede, and he mighty near started one of his own. Horses kicked and squealed and broke loose, and went tearing down the street. He caught one on the fly and ripped a patch of hide from its flank. And always close beneath his flying heels, darting in and out and nipping at his legs every time they hit the ground, came Lady.

Every bone in Skyline's rangy frame creaked and groaned under the strain. Pretty soon his head swam and his eyes dimmed, and he felt like everything inside of him was ripping loose. Through the swirling dust he saw faces, buildings, horses, and wagons that came and went and wavered like figures in a mirage. Blood roared in his ears and dribbled from his nose. But his whippy body bent and swayed in anticipation of every move, maintaining perfect balance, and his heart swelled with pride in the way his horse was performing.

He kept thinking over and over, "Never seen finer pitchin'. Good Old Cloudy! Knowed you had it in you. Let 'er rip!"

Presently he heard the girl's voice, anxious and excited. "Lady! Stop it! Come here! Bart Tempton, you can make her mind. She's your dog."

For just an instant Skyline caught sight of her through the dust. She had the sporty fellow by the arm and it looked like she was giving him a shaking, but the cuss was laughing fit to kill. So that black-headed gal was trying to stop what she started. He could stop it, maybe, but damned if he'd do it. He'd ride it out.

At length, after the tall rider had lost all track of time and felt that he'd lost nearly everything else, Cloudbust came down on four stiff legs. His knees gave a trifle. He was tired and trembling and the dog no longer nipped at his heels, so he probably figured it was time to quit his foolishness.

Again he looked truculently about him, tossed his head, and snorted. He rolled an eye at his boss as much as to say, "No hard feelin's, I hope."

Breathing hard, Skyline reached out with a shaky hand and slapped the roan high on the neck.

"Why you daggoned old plug-ugly!" he drawled. "Is that the best you got?"

Several spontaneous yells, whistles, and some hand clapping arose from the spectators. Skyline wiped blood from his nose and mouth with his bandana and grinned; but the grin was more or less forced and slightly pale. He swung Cloudbust toward the nearest hitchrack, which happened to be in front of the store, and he wondered whether his knees would wabble when his feet hit solid ground. He eased himself out of the saddle and tied his horse. As he was loosening cinches and straightening his saddle blanket, the girl stepped down from the porch.

Skyline Jackson had the feeling that his brains were pretty well mixed up and his eyesight was a bit hazy, but all this didn't keep him from admiring the clothes she had on. He liked that wine colored riding habit which fit so daggoned tight from the waist up, and had a row of shiny brass buttons down the front and on its cuffs; and he figured she was smart to wear a black Stetson and fasten one side of the brim to the crown with some kind of a pin that looked like a Mexican silver dollar. The freckled bronc peeler sort of shook his head and blinked his eyes and took another look; he was mighty glad he locked horns with them Santone po-lice.

He thought her eyes were powerful big when she offered him her hand.

"Mister," she said in a low voice, "I'm awful sorry. I had no idea that any horse could pitch like that."

A short distance away, the bony old-timer hugged the Winchester and chuckled from spur rowels to the crown of his hat.

"Me neither, Jessie," he rumbled. "I seen some pitchin' in my day, but I'll swear this is the fust time I ever seen a hoss pitch a fella clean out'n his socks without shuckin' his boots, and make him shed hardware when he wa'n't a-packin' none to begin with. Looky yander."

He pointed, everybody else looked. Out in the middle of the street, half buried in the dust, were Skyline's cart-

ridge belts and guns and a pair of bright red socks. A glance told him that the yellow slicker, rolled and tied behind the cantle in such a way as to hold his belongings, had opened up enough to betray him. Damn that dog! At the moment he was painfully aware that his face and neck were the color of the socks, but he grinned sheepishly at the girl and stalked into the street to gather his effects.

Skyline Jackson knew he must look funny beating dust out of his red socks, and he didn't blame the folks for laughing. In fact, he did some laughing himself while shuffling back to his horse. But it did rile him to see that two-legged something in fancy clothes laugh longer and louder than anyone else, so he silently swore he'd give Bart Tempton something to laugh about the first chance he got.

After replacing everything where it belonged, he made his way under the rack and onto the porch. Looking the girl squarely in the eye, he took off his hat and drawled easily, "Miss, you ain't got nothin' to feel sorry about, 'cause ever so often me and Cloudbust just nacherally cut loose like that, and—"

He broke off suddenly. Bart Tempton was standing at the far end of the porch. From the side of his eye Skyline saw him gesture cautiously to someone in the street, and indistinctly heard him say something. He caught the look of fright that flashed across Jessie's face, and glanced backward in the nick of time.

Lady was making a sly dash at his heels!

There and then she probably got the surprise of her life. Skyline Jackson didn't kick high like a horse or low like a cow. He merely shot a big hand down and clenched onto the loose skin at the back of her neck. She squirmed and snarled and snapped, but he lifted her to a level with his face. Holding the little coyote-colored dog there for a long moment, he gravely looked her over.

Presently he drawled, "Lady, you ain't no lady."

Slowly drooping an eyelid at the girl, he added, "And what I mean, yo' boss ain't no gent."

SEVERAL men laughed shortly. Chuckling quietly, the old-timer uncoiled from from where he had hunkered down against a post and dropped the rifle across his arm. But there was no mirth in the girl's face.

Suddenly she looked apprehensively past Skyline and exclaimed, "Bart! Don't!"

Shooting a glance over his shoulder, Skyline saw the young dandy coming his way, and from the expression on his dark face, he was fixing to start something. Near at hand stood a fire barrel filled with water, which gave the bronc rider an idea. He plunged Lady into the barrel. She made a good splash, and he shoved her down until she hit bottom. Before anyone realized what was up, he hauled her out with a jerk and swung her around in a quick backhanded sweep. It was his intention to shower Bart with water, but he erred in judging the distance or estimating the length of the dog.

Limp as a dishrag and wet as only a long-haired dog can get, she stretched and her soggy tail swiped the dandy across the face. Evidently Lady suffered no injury, for she didn't make a sound; but his blue silk shirt and pearl grey Stetson were liberally sprinkled. His hat flew one way, he staggered the other.

Skyline turned loose of Lady and she fell into the dust beneath the rack. Rolling over, she got up sneezing and went away from there like a terrified chunk of mud. Cloudbust struck at her with a front foot, a clean miss by a yard or more.

The tall redhead thought mighty fast. He figured this thing had gone far

enough. He was perfectly willing to introduce himself and his horse to Bandera by cutting a shine in a spirit of innocent fun, but he couldn't afford to get tangled in anything serious. San Antonio might hear about it. So he concluded he'd have to take a chance on dehorning the big fellow before he got the water and dog hair out of his eyes and mouth.

It took some fast work, but Skyline got Bart's guns an instant before he made a grab for them. By a hair's breadth he ducked a fist that would have beefed him cold, backed off, and tossed the six-shooters out into the dusty street.

After sidestepping and blocking another rush, he folded his arms and grinned at his big antagonist. "Better go sorta slow, mistah. 'Tain't no use for you to git red-eyed, 'cause if I hurt yo' dog I'll shore apologize a-plenty. I like dogs."

Pale with anger and humiliation, Tempton seemed momentarily undecided what to do next. He looked the loose-jointed horseman over from head to foot as though he'd love to tear him apart.

"Afraid to go heeled," he growled hoarsely. "Git your guns and we'll settle this like men."

Skyline thought it wise to hold his tongue and see what happened. A number of men had clustered around, the old-timer in the front rank.

"Bart Tempton," he cut in quickly, "'pears to me you'd better hobble yo' jaw. This here pilgrim has done made you a fair and square proposition, ain't he, fellas?"

Several of the spectators nodded affirmatively, and one of them declared, "I reckon Old Kick is 'bout right. Can't you take a joke, Bart?"

To Skyline's surprise, the young man had nothing more to say. He merely growled something unintelligible, picked up his hat, and stalked off into the street after his guns without glancing back.

"Which goes to show," thought the freckled horseman, "that Bandera is jest as peaceful as she looks, so I gotta behave myself."

Not a word was said while Tempton recovered his six-shooters and mounted his horse on the far side of the street. Watching the young dandy ride away, Old Kick could contain himself no longer. He handed Skyline his Winchester and burst out laughing.

"Oh Lawdy! Lawdy!" the old man howled. "I done seen fellas git tromped and gored and drilled and carved, but I never thought I'd live to see ary pore cuss git slapped in the mouth with a wet dawg."

Jessie laughed, dabbed a handkerchief to her eyes, and laughed some more in the way Skyline liked to see a girl laugh. He took off his hat and grinned dryly at her.

"I'm shore obliged," he declared. "If you-all hadn't took up for me, more'n likely I'd be plumb dead and buried deep by now."

Old Kick gave him a disgusted look.

"Huh!" he snorted. "Fust thing we know, you'll be a-swearin' you pack them two Colts jest to weight down yo' pony's hind end."

T. C. Jackson's long face got very serious.

"You see it's like this," he drawled. "I keep 'em 'cause they was a birthday present."

"Is that a fact?"

"Shore is," declared Skyline with convincing sincerity. "I was brung up in the Devil's River country and she's tough country, so my pappy buckled them guns onto me the very day I was two year old."

IN THE course of the introductions that followed, Skyline learned that the girl's name was Jessie North; but further than that, he found out nothing about her. She tarried on the porch just

long enough to tell him she hoped he'd like the town and stay a spell. He promptly assured her that he would, and he did it with sufficient enthusiasm to bring a touch of color to her cheeks.

Old Kickapoo Joe watched Jessie disappear in the store, then winked at Skyline and said dryly, "If you figger on gittin' hold of a piece of land and settlin' in Bandera County, fust thing you better do is to put up yo' nag. Then we'll see can we find some water to wash the dust out'n yo' throat. We got us the best water in Texas."

"Water?" Skyline grunted. "Betcha you wouldn't taste water if you was a-drowndin' in it."

The old-timer chuckled and told him to go get his horse before he started another ruckus.

While untying Cloudbust and fussing around his saddle, the redhead did some serious thinking. He was mighty glad to see that Old Kick had taken a liking to him. At the same time, however, he felt that the old man was sort of taking his measure for some purpose and he wondered what it was. Old Kick was different from the balance of the men he had met in Bandera. Skyline sized the others up as being small ranchers, farmers, freighters, traders, and workmen of all sorts—good solid citizens, but not at all like the breed of cowmen and horsemen with which he was familiar.

These people were neither wild nor tough. No doubt they'd fight plenty hard in defense of their property and families, but they'd probably look to the law for protection as far as possible. He noticed that nearly every vehicle and saddle carried its rifle, old Spencers and Henrys or modern Winchesters, and a number of the men wore belt guns.

Looking the Bandera folks over, Travis Crockett Jackson was suddenly struck by the thought that in this society he stood out like a green bronc in a band of working stock. And that wasn't so good, he reflected. If anybody came looking for him, he'd sure be mighty easy to find. However, he chanced to catch a glimpse of Jessie as she drew a piece of dress goods about her slim waist and came to the door to study the effect, and he decided there were lots of steep hills between San Antonio and Bandera. Moreover, since rolling into town he hadn't seen anything that looked like a marshal or sheriff: probably didn't have one. So he tramped off through the dust with the old-timer, leading Cloudbust and sort of wondering whether there wasn't a horse outfit somewhere in these hills that might need one of the best riders in Texas.

He soon found out. Before they reached the livery stable, Kickapoo Joe stopped suddenly and moved out of the road at a point where no one else was near. After a quick glance around them, he asked sharply, "You're a bronc peeler, ain't you?"

"More or less."

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"And you're job huntin', I betcha."

Skyline smelled a rat. This old cuss was looking for a rider and they must be scarce, otherwise he wouldn't grab onto a stranger. That being the case, the lanky horseman figured he'd try to take advantage of a nice situation.

Shoving a hand into his pocket, he jingled his sole remaining three silver dollars in an attempt to make them sound like gold twenties. "Well, sorta."

Old Kick pulled his hat down almost to the high bridge of his hooked nose. "Now young fella, don't you gimme none of yo' sass. I know a busted twister when I see one of 'em. Far as money goes, you're mighty nigh as clean as a hound's tooth—and I ain't talkin'."

A couple of hundred yards away, a fat woman was wrestling a calf that somehow had got itself stuck halfway across the rock fence enclosing her yard. Skyline watched her speculatively.

When she got the front end of the calf back inside the fence, he drawled, "Calves is shore aggravatin' critters, 'specially the front and hind ends of 'em."

The old man grunted.

"And as I was fixin' to say," continued the freckled rider, "I got me a leetle property over in the Devil's River country."

"Property, fiddlesticks!"

"Shore 'nuff. Mostly land."

Kickapoo Joe put his hands on his hips and ran a scornful eye the full length of Skyline's loose-jointed frame. "Land, hell! All the land you got is 'bout seven feet in some sheriff's boot hill, jest a-waitin' for yo' wuthless carcass. You ain't a-foolin' me. I know buzzard bait far as I can smell it."

SKYLINE poured tobacco into a brown paper and handed the makin's to Old Kick. "Yes sah, I leased my land to a cattle king and ain't done a lick of work for better'n two year."

"'Tain't noways hard to believe that you ain't worked none."

The tall horseman let smoke dribble out of his long nose. "But a fella does git sorta tired of lazyin' 'round, jest a-spendin' his money and meetin' up with peculiar folks like you."

"You do look powerful leg-weary and ganted up."

Skyline Jackson gazed off across the green-clad hills, and said to himself that it was about the prettiest country he ever saw.

"Too daggoned bad," he drawled, "but I reckon they ain't no hoss outfits wuth mentionin' in this here sorry country."

"Grummph!" growled the old-timer. "You're a-standin' smack in the middle of the best durned hoss country you ever laid eyes on."

"Cain't hardly believe it," mused the rangy red head. "But I calc'late these here hills oughta make purty fair grazin' for Mexican goats."

For a moment, Skyline had the uncomfortable feeling that Kickapoo Joe's sharp gray eyes were looking clean through him.

"Mmmm-huh," muttered the old man. "Goats and fellas that's on the dodge 'pear to do right well in our Bandera hills: plenty water, big feed, and mighty fine climate."

Travis Crockett Jackson's face got even longer, for he tried to look innocent. "Good grub, did you say?"

"Sartinly," declared Old Kick. "The Dead Injun outfit has fried chicken and yams mighty nigh three times a day."

The lanky rider showed a spark of interest. "Reckon a fella *can* git along on that. But I'm gittin' so stove up I cain't set the rough ones any more, and I betcha a colt that's brung up on these here hills gits to be all-fired rough by the time he's old enough to ride."

"That's where you're daid wrong," said the old timer. "On the Dead Injun range, all the colts is raised by hand

and bottle-fed so's they mammies won't sp'ile 'em. Plumb pets, that's what they are."

T. C. Jackson had a hard time keeping a straight face. "Well I'll swan! That's how I got the reppitation of bein' the best rider in all Texas, a-gentlin' pets. Whereabouts is this here Good Injun outfit?"

Old Kick grinned, jerked his head in a northerly direction. "Over yander a piece, across Bandera Creek and this side of the pass."

Skyline let his gaze drift carelessly along the northern horizon. "'Pears to me they ain't much room up there. The Dead Injun must be jest a leetle one-hoss sheebang."

"One-hoss, hell! Ten thousand acres."

The lanky redhead stroked the stubble on his long jaw. "Is that all? Huh! Out in the Devil's River country we call ten thousand acres a middlin' big pole corral. What do they do with the hosses?"

"Hold 'em in the bunkhouse with the jackasses, you durned idjit!"

Skyline grinned. "If a fella was hankerin' to gentle a few colts, whereabouts would he be likely to run onto the Dead Injun boss at this time of day?"

Kickapoo Joe scratched the back of his neck. "Lemme see. All depends on the fella and how much wages he figgers he can git. The Dead Injun and every last hoof on her is mine."

From that point negotiations proceeded by easy stages, suffering frequent interruptions while lies were swapped and friendly insults exchanged. The final agreement, duly signed and sealed by a handshake, provided that Skyline Jackson would receive sixty dollars per month for his services.

ON THE way back to the hotel some time later, it dawned upon him that he might have been the victim of skullduggery. Maybe that sixty dollars would turn out to be fighting wages; if so, it should have been not a cent less than a hundred.

So he casually observed, "This looks to me like a quiet range and I'm glad of it, 'cause I shore don't never aim to git tangled in no trouble."

Kickapoo Joe hitched up his cartridge belt and allowed, "She's a quiet range, all right. Bandera County thieves don't make no racket when they steal a hoss, and they can slit a throat with less noise and more blood than ary knifer you ever seen. Yes sah, Skyline, things is all-fired quiet up here in the hill country."

T. C. Jackson mentally kicked himself.

Gentlin' pet colts, hell! He'd earn his sixty a month a-chousin' horse thieves out of these hills. It hurt his pride to think that the old cuss had outtraded him; but at the same time, he kind of liked the idea. In common with all frontiersmen, he hated a horse thief.

"Have you lost much stuff?" he said casually.

"Oh, so-so," answered Kickapoo. "For the past year I jest been raisin' hosses for the thieves, but from now on I calc'late it'll be a different story."

"Ain't you got no sheriff or nothin'?"

"Yep, we got us a sheriff."

"How come he ain't put a stop to this hoss stealin'?"

"Takes time," declared the old man. "Takes a heap of time to ketch a hoss thief if he's slick, and our'n is plenty slick."

Skyline grunted scornfully. "Time, nothin'! Out in the Devil's River country a thief steals him a hoss befo' midnight and we hang the cuss befo' sunup. 'Pears to me yo' sheriff don't amount to much."

Kickapoo Joe took off his hat and ran a bony hand through his heavy white hair. "Maybeso. Some folks allows he's a sorry and triflin' cuss and I don't never argy with 'em none, 'cause I'm him."

"You're what?"

"Uh-huh, I'm pussonally the sheriff of Bandera County."

"Well I'll be everlastingly—!"

Skyline's supply of language temporarily deserted him. All he could do was to think, "Durned fool! High-tail it into these here hills to git plumb away from the law, and fust thing I do is to up and go to work for the sheriff." He wanted to cuss and he wanted to laugh, so he did neither.

Tiny lines came and went at the corners of the old sheriff's long keen eyes. He said dryly, "I betcha 'tain't the fust time you been surprised by a sheriff."

Skyline changed the subject. "Why don't yo' deppity help you to chouse these here thieves out'n the timber? Or maybe you ain't got none."

"Shore I got me a deppity," Old Kick hastened to say. "He's a right good hand at doin' paper work and wearin' fancy clothes, but—"

"Hold on! Don't tell me that there big sport is—"

"You hit 'er dead center fust shot," interrupted Kickapoo Joe. Chuckling in high glee, he continued, "The dude that you busted in the face with his own dawg is my deppity, no foolin'."

T. C. Jackson stopped in his tracks. He looked back at the livery stable and away at the hills on the horizon.

"Surprised?" inquired the old man slyly.

"Hell no!" exploded the young horseman. "I wouldn't be noways surprised now if you was to tell me that there black-headed gal is yo' deppity."

Old Kick pursed his lips. "In a manner of speakin', Jessie's my deppity, all right. I'm her pappy."

Skyline smothered a groan, trying desperately to remember everything he'd said about the girl up to now. He folded his arms and glared at the grinning old-timer.

"Don't believe a word of it," he growled. " 'Tain't nacheral for a ornery cuss like you to have a gal like her."

Kickapoo Joe's silent laughter suddenly burst out in a roar that carried far and wide.

Presently he stopped for breath, took a good look at the red-faced bronc rider, and started in again.

Skyline grinned in spite of his embarrassment. "Hush up, damn it! Folks will think I'm a-killin' you slow and painful. Why in hell didn't you tell me yo' name is North?"

Old Kick wiped his eyes. "I did, you durned simpleton, over to the store. But you was so all-fired busy a-gawkin' at Jessie, you never paid me no mind."

Secretly Skyline had to admit that this was the gospel truth.

"And you better be thankful to me," the old timer continued, "for not remindin' you that Jessie's my gal, 'cause if I had, you would've been tickled to work for the Dead Injun for mighty nigh nothin' at all. So you're money to the good."

They tramped on toward the hotel, the tall rider subdued and having little to say.

He covertly sized up Kickapoo Joe North, mulled over the things he had seen and heard since arriving at Bandera, and came to the decision that the old scoundrel was just about the slickest proposition he ever saw.

By the time they reached Main Street, he was saying to himself, "If them Santone po-lice don't come a-nosin' 'round, betcha I have a heap of fun in this here Bandera country befo' I git run out of it—if I do."

AT THIS hour of the evening, the wide verandas of the Duffy Hotel provided attractions which a visitor was sure to enjoy.

Here the Bandera citizen was certain to meet others of his kind, to get news and give it, to listen avidly to any stranger who talked of distant places and to appraise him politely while spec-

ulating upon who he was, where he came from, and why.

After they had washed up, the boss of the Dead Indian Ranch led his new hand around to the veranda and gave him another surprise. In a rocking chair at the far end sat Jessie with a well-dressed stranger upon either side of her. Bart Tempton lounged on the edge of the porch facing her. He looked none the worse in body or spirit as a result of his recent embarrassing experience, and Skyline gave him credit for the nerve to show up here so soon after it happened.

Taking in the situation at a glance, the tall horseman jabbed Old Kick in the ribs with the point of his elbow. "Daggone yo' ornery hide, why didn't you tell me she'd be here so's I could git me a shave and climb into my other shirt?"

Kickapoo Joe took time to speak to the proprietor, genial Colonel Duffy, who hailed him through a front window. Afterwards he turned his hawk face to Skyline and growled, "If you figger to switch shirts every time you meet up with Jessie, you won't have no time left to gentle colts."

After watching the girl and her satellites for a moment, the old-timer continued, "That there maverick on her off side is a cattle buyer from Kansas City, and the jasper on her nigh side is a Fort Wuth horse dealer. Both if 'em has got slathers of money." He lowered his voice confidentially. "I know for a fact that Jessie aims to marry one of them rannies, but I ain't shore which."

Skyline Jackson drawled, "All I got to say is, the lucky fella is due to ketch him a mighty fine wife and a hell of a father-in-law."

The old sheriff laughed and gave him a hearty slap on the back.

From all sides, joking remarks were aimed at Kickapoo Joe and chairs were offered to him. Obviously he wanted his new rider to share this popularity. Taking the red-faced young man by the arm, he introduced him with a familiarity that was both pleasing and embarrassing.

"Folks," said the sheriff, "this here slab-sided cuss allows his name is Skyline Jackson, but he cain't prove it. He's a driftin' bronc buster from the Devil's River country, but I reckon he'll stay here long enough for us to hang him, 'cause I done hired him to gentle them pet colts of mine."

Skyline stole a glance at Jessie and caught her eye. She smiled in a way that made him hope the Dead Indian outfit had a thousand colts to gentle, the tougher the better.

From that time on until the bell rang for supper, Skyline was an attentive listener in the group that gathered around the sheriff. Although these men were reticent when touching upon the affairs of individuals, they freely discussed matters of general interest to the community—notably the activity of horse thieves. No one said anything that savored of criticism, but the confident manner in which they looked to the sheriff for relief was sufficient to make any conscientious officer feel the weight of his responsibility.

And Old Kick felt it, no two ways about it. But he offered no excuses, made no apologies. He merely repeated what he told Skyline, "Takes a heap of time to ketch a slick hoss thief." In this instance he added, "And fellas, the coyotes we're after now are jest about the slickest I ever tangled with—Lipans, Comanches, and Kickapoos regardless."

Worry deepened the lines and displaced the humor in the old sheriff's leathery face, and the sight of it got under Skyline's hide. He remembered how the old cuss had taken him at face value and hired him and vouched for him to all these folks, and he said to himself that more'n likely he'd buckle on his guns before he left these Bandera hills.

At length a buxom Polish girl with

hair parted in the exact center of her head and drawn tightly away from her round face, came to the door and rang a small hand bell. Hungry men scraped their chairs and the conversation stopped, but they politely held back so that Jessie North and her three escorts might lead the way into the dining room.

ALTHOUGH Skyline stuck to the girl's trail like a cutting horse working a herd, the best he could do was a chair away down on the opposite side of the table. Somehow or other, he got the impression that Old Kick kept shouldering him out of the right track. Before the meal was over, however, he wished he had eaten his supper in another county.

He was managing to get along right well with some young beef, mashed potatoes, squash, milk gravy, wild plum preserves, and corn bread, when another man came in and took a chair across the table. This wiry little newcomer, whom Colonel Duffy hailed as "Bucky", had just completed a flying trip to San Antonio and the other diners were interested in getting news from the city.

Bucky had news all right, plenty of it.

The hungry redhead was only mildly interested in what he had to say until he came to what he apparently considered his best news item, having saved it to the last. Bucky told the story well, and Skyline Jackson paid strict attention so as not to miss a single word of it.

The way Bucky got it, a cowhand who wasn't what a fella could rightly call tight, although he was feeling his oats, accidentally bumped into another man at the entrance to the Munger Hotel. The gent who got bumped was short and fat and he had on a cutaway coat, a silk hat, and fancy striped britches; and he was packing a gold-headed cane to boot. Without an I, yes, or no, the fat man tried to dally the cane around the cowhand's head; and to make matters worse, he called the poor hand a filthy savage who shouldn't be allowed on the same street with decent white folks.

From that point on, things were pretty well mixed up and no two reports agreed in all particulars, but Bucky did learn for certain that the cowhand pulled a gun and put a bullet through the silk hat while it was still on the fat fella's head, another while it was in the air, and two more as it hopped down the street. An eye witness told Bucky that the fat man carried on about his hat until he got the hand sorta riled, and quicker'n a fella could say "Jack Robinson" the cowboy picked the dude up and slung him over his shoulder like you'd carry a dead buck; then he set off at a fox-trot for the river, a short distance away. The banks were rather high at that point, but it didn't seem to make any difference to the cowhand. He pitched the fat fella in head first, cutaway coat and fancy britches regardless; and he threw the gold-headed cane in after the cuss.

By this time the shooting had attracted a couple of policemen and several other people; and while the citizens fished the fat man from the river, the policemen lit out after the cowboy. They gained on him fast, and everybody said it was because his high-heeled boots weren't made for any kind of running, because nobody ever tried any harder than that cowboy did. The law was fixing to lay hands on him when he came to where his horse was tied, jerked his hackamore rope loose and hit the saddle on the fly, letting out a string of yells that just about tied up business for the time being.

The policemen made the mistake of sending a couple of shots after him and the horse; and just before he turned the next corner he cut down with his second gun and smashed a gas street lamp above their heads, then bounced a couple of bullets off the cobblestones right close to their feet. Bucky allowed he couldn't get much out of those two

"It don't never pay to rile them Devil's River boys."

policemen about what happened after that, because they claimed the walls of Woo Sang's laundry were so daggoned thick they couldn't see through 'em.

A storm of laughter interrupted Bucky, so he paused until it passed over.

The sheriff kicked Skyline beneath the table. With a sanctimonious expression on his face, he muttered under cover of the noise, "I call that a hell of a way for a fella to act up, don't you?"

T. C. Jackson sedately sliced off a slab of beef, trowelled a generous portion of mashed potatoes onto it, and conveyed the result to his big mouth with a steady hand.

"All depends," he drawled. "Betcha he was from the Devil's River country, and what I mean, it don't never pay to rile them Devil's River boys."

While Kickapoo Joe was thinking this over, Bucky got started again. Of course everybody thought that fool cowhand would hit out for the brush before the police got a roundup crew on the ground, but he didn't. The citizens hadn't any more than got the fat man wrung out and started back toward the hotel, when here came the cowboy. The instant he caught sight of the fat fella he let out another yell, took down his rope and shook out a calf-sized loop and belly-

roped that wet dude as slick as a whistle. He snaked the poor cuss back to the river as fast as his fat legs could carry him, holding off the citizens with a six-shooter and taking up his slack as he went along. By the time they reached the bank the fat man was almost within arm's reach, so it wasn't any trick for the cowboy to get his rope off and give the pudgy fella a shove with his boot. Even before the splash came that crazy hand was a-headin' north, thumbing cartridges into his guns as fast as he could and whooping fit to kill.

Bucky went on to say that nearly everybody figured the fat fella got what was coming to him, so he couldn't understand why the town was in such an uproar over the doings until he found out that the cuss was a United States Senator and chairman of some committee or other, and that he had made a special trip from Washington to San Antonio to see about spending a lot of government money down there. After that he couldn't much blame 'em for calling out the sheriff and all his deputies and every policeman they could spare, and even talking about sending for a company of Rangers to help 'em comb the country for that wild cowboy. If San Antonio ever hoped to get any of that government money, they simply had to hang that poor hand and let the fat politician tie the knot to ease his feelings.

When Bucky finished his story, Skyline shot a quick glance at Jessie. She had her eye on him, and he plainly saw the makings of a smile playing about the corners of her mouth. He slid a finger around inside his collar, wishing to the devil he was out doors where a fella could get him a breath of fresh air.

Suddenly a chill ran up and down his spine, for he heard Bart Tempton say, "Bucky, I betcha that drunk is worth money in Santone today. Did you ever find out what he looked like?"

Before Bart got the words out of his mouth, Old Kick spoke up lazily, "I been sorta wonderin' 'bout that myself."

Naturally Bucky looked at the sheriff rather than Tempton; and from the corner of his eye, Skyline caught the lightning glance at himself and the unspoken demand for caution which the old-timer flashed across the table.

Bucky got the drift all right. Turning to Bart, he answered casually, "Shore I found out all about him. He was a hammered down scalawag, broad as he is long, and he's got a heap of black hair and whiskers."

Skyline Jackson sighed cautiously, and helped himself to a quarter section of apple pie. While everybody else was laughing and talking, he dryly remarked to Old Kick, " 'Pears to me Bucky is a right clever fella."

"He's the damndest liar in Texas," growled the old-timer. "And fust chance I git, I aim to make him tell me the truth 'bout what that there bloodthirsty Santone desperado looked like."

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM DEVIL'S RIVER

LONG before the end of his ride from Bandera to the Dead Indian ranch that night, Skyline felt like one of the family. Jessie treated him with a comradely familiarity which won his heart; and he said to himself that if Jessie was as homely as a cow, she'd still be the finest girl in Texas.

He soon learned that she knew horses and could talk his language. In fact, she pretty nearly used some of his profanity when telling about the theft of a certain buckskin pony of which she was very fond.

Nor was she any stranger to cows, for Old Kick had always run from a thousand to two thousand head in addition to his horses. At first Skyline thought Jessie might be talking cows and horses just to impress him; but he quick-

ly changed his mind upon learning that her father practically raised her, his wife having been killed by the Indians when the girl was a small child—his only child.

"Yep, I larned Jessie mighty nigh everything she knows," proudly declared Old Kick, "but you can jest betcha I ain't noways to blame for her wrappin' fo'ty yards of bed-tickin' 'round herself thataway and ridin' one of them daggoned side-saddles. It's a insult to a honest hoss, ain't it, Skyline?"

T. C. Jackson discreetly said nothing.

Jessie laughed. It seemed perfectly natural for her to call her father by his given name. "I can't make Joe understand that I've got to live with the other women in this country. If I ever rode into town man-fashion like I do every place else, some of 'em would want to burn me at the stake."

When they rounded a motte of live-oaks and continued up a slope to a long, two-story rock house, he was almost glad to learn that this was the end of their journey. A few more miles in the moonlight with Jessie North, and he wouldn't be worth shooting for days to come; and with broncs to ride, horse thieves to fight, and policemen to dodge, he couldn't afford to go mooning around with a bad case of girl trouble.

Dead Indian headquarters were dark when they got home, and Kickapoo Joe remarked that he worked his men so hard they went to bed with the chickens. The outfit consisted of three regular hands, an old German woman who did the cooking and took care of the house, and her husband, who did odd jobs when he couldn't get out of it. There was no bunkhouse. Everybody lived in the ranchhouse; and after the horses were watered and turned loose in a small pasture, he showed Skyline how to find a large room upstairs and told him to roll into bed with one of the boys.

"Two full-sized beds is too many for three hands," the old man growled. "Softens 'em up somethin' scandalous. Come cool weather we start brandin', and I put on extry men and sleep 'em three and fo' in a bed."

Upon meeting the other men in the morning, Skyline found them to be exactly what he had expected: men born and brought up in the hills, who never strayed far from their home range. There was Henry Schott, an awkward, bashful young fellow of whom Old Kick was evidently quite fond, because he tormented Hank unmercifully. Tom Cross and Fred Greiner were steady, middle-aged men who had been on the Dead Indian payroll for years. Although they had done their share of trailing and skirmishing with redskins, they were not fighting men. Skyline Jackson could well understand why the old sheriff might feel the need of an experienced gunfighter to help him.

AFTER breakfast Kickapoo Joe took his new hand out to show him the country and during the ensuing hour's ride Skyline fell head-over-heels in love with it. Headquarters house stood at the highest point and almost in the center of a great valley with a gently rolling surface. Firmly established at points on the floor of the valley, vast armies of trees stormed the steep sides of the hills that surrounded it like the rim of a gigantic bowl with serrated edges, and their stalwart sentinels waved their leafy arms triumphantly on the summit of the rim.

A few miles to the north, a deep nick cut into the rim of the bowl as if a giant had struck it there and broken out a piece. Kickapoo Joe pointed to it and reined his horse to a stop. Watching him curiously, Skyline saw a somber shadow deepen the lines in his craggy face; and when he spoke, the solemnity of his voice was startling.

He explained that yonder was the famous Bandera Pass through which Indian raiders had swept south and fled

north long before, and for years after white men came to settle in these hills. In few words he told how, as a small boy he went north through the pass, captive of the band of Kickapoos that murdered his people and burned their home not far from San Antonio. Too briefly, he told of his escape and return through the pass a few years later. Skyline asked no questions, but he devoutly hoped that some day he'd get to hear all that story.

A note of grim satisfaction now crept into Joe North's voice, for he was there in '41 when Colonel Jack Hayes and his Rangers fought and whipped the Comanches. The white men buried their dead at the south entrance to the pass, but the Indians carried most of theirs away.

"Them damned Comanches never forgot that lickin'," he said proudly.

The old man paused for a while. His keen gray eyes lost some of their luster, his rugged face grew pensive. When he again spoke, his voice was pitched lower and he gave few details. Indians swooped down upon the valley when he and the men were away from home, and Jessie was off in the woods with Frieda, the German woman. They lanced the little girl's mother to death, and they fled north through the pass with her scalp.

He stopped. Deep in his old eyes a flame leaped up. He said, "I killed three hosses a-chasin' 'em, and I killed five Injuns when I ketched 'em."

The flame flickered and died. Kickapoo Joe quickly swung his horse around. They rode south, away from the pass.

JESSIE NORTH met them a mile from the house, riding a spooky bay which Skyline figured most girls would be afraid to ride. Dressed in green the color of the cedars, a divided skirt and shirtwaist, laughing at the antics of her fiery horse, who wanted to turn himself loose and go places, she made this homely bronc rider think of some beautiful wild creature that had never known the confinement of a corral. One moment he felt awkward and uncouth in her presence; but the next instant he longed to put spurs to his horse and race with her through the hills.

On the ride back to headquarters he had little to say. Often he sensed that Jessie was studying his profile, perhaps wondering what had tied his usually active tongue; or perhaps, being all girl, she knew what was wrong even better than he.

Old Nosey and her frisky colt led a remuda of thirty geldings into the circular picket corral. Hank, Tom, and Fred had little trouble in throwing them into the wings that converged at the gate; but Skyline saw at a glance that if it hadn't been for Old Nosey and her colt, three men would have had a devil of a time penning those thirty horses.

Jessie, Old Kick, and he sat their horses a short distance away from the gate. Frowning thoughtfully, the young man read their brands and watched the animals closely as they cavorted past. Joe and the girl watched him.

The last pony snorted and shied, then kicked up its heels and plunged into the corral. Skyline slowly turned his long face to his companions.

He winked at the girl and grinned dryly at the old man. "Pet colts!"

"That's what I allowed," declared Joe. "Plumb pets."

"Hand-raised and bottle-fed," the redhead drawled. "Huh! Green broncs, every last hoof of 'em."

"Do tell?"

"Yes sah-ree, and they're man-eaters from who laid the chunk."

Old Kick shook his head. "Cain't believe it. They look gentle as kittens to me."

"Wildcats," growled Skyline. "And they never was foaled in this tame country."

Kickapoo Joe seemed vastly surprised. "Is that a fact? I shore hate to think it, but I reckon they mammies done me dirt by swappin' colts with some strange mares. Ain't no other way it could've happened."

Jessie kept a straight face, but her eyes were very bright. Skyline glanced sidewise at her, then sternly told the old man, "I know them blood-thirsty beasts a heap better'n you ever will, 'cause they chased all the panthers and grizzlies out'n the Devil's River country and I was there when they done it. A while back, Old Sidewheel Johnson put up a herd of 'em and started to trail 'em to a new range in the San Saba county up north of here a piece. Jest befo' they got there, the herd was raided and they scattered like quail. I heard tell that the crew finally managed to gether a hundred or so of 'em, and the boss sold 'em on the spot to some pore ignoramus that happened along and didn't know no better. Betcha you're him."

Kickapoo Joe threw back his head and roared.

"You durned old scalawag," exclaimed Skyline. "You shore bamboozled me a-plenty, but you done me a good turn regardless. A-fightin' them broncs, I won't never git homesick for Devil's River. D'you want 'em broke or gentled?"

Joe North wiped his eyes. "Gentle 'em, and gentle 'em good. I aim to sell them pets to old wimmin and chillun and tenderfeet."

"Glad to hear it," declared the lanky rider. He looked hard at Jessie and drawled, " 'Cause that simply means I'll be here from now on."

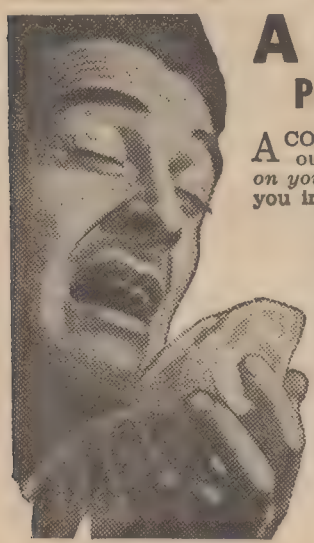
Skyline swung Cloudbust over to the gate and dismounted. He took down his rope, remarking to the old man that he might as well start in trying to earn his wages.

Kickapoo Joe had his eye on the trail from the south.

"Hold on a minute," he said quietly. "Somebody comin', and I wouldn't be at all surprised if it's Bart."

JESSIE and the three hands followed the old-timer's gaze, intently studying the approaching rider. Skyline built a small loop and idly flipped it back and forth on the ground while waiting. A few minutes later, the sheriff dismounted and came to where the young man was standing. The girl followed on her pony.

"It's Bart, shore 'nuff," declared Kick-



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apoo Joe, "and I'd give a pritty if it was somebody else."

Both his face and Jessie's were deadly serious, but Skyline was only politely interested.

"You-all don't need to be put out none on my account," he drawled, "'cause I ain't got nothin' agin that dude."

"Mebbe not," barked Old Kick, "but he's got plenty agin you."

Skyline started to say something, but the old man stopped him impatiently.

"You listen to me, young fella," he continued, speaking more rapidly than usual. "Jest 'cause Bart Tempton let you off easy once, don't never think he'll do it twice. He don't like to git his purty face bunged up, but that won't keep him from doin' his durndest to git square with you one way or another."

Again Skyline tried to interrupt. The sheriff cut him off sharply.

"Hush yo' mouth and listen close!" he snapped. "Bart ain't noways like the balance of these here Bandera boys. He jest drifted into this country a year or so ago, and he don't belong here. I ain't shore what he done befo' he hit Bandera, but I know they's one thing he can do and that's sling a gun powerful fast."

Although the red-headed horseman said nothing aloud, the expression on his good-natured face seemed to say, "What's that to me?"

Kickapoo Joe was nettled by Skyline's lack of concern. He shot a glance up the trail, then continued, "Mind what I tell you, he ain't skeered of nothin'. Jest 'cause he rigs hisself out like a dude, he has fooled more'n one pore jasper into thinkin' he's a big wind and plumb harmless—so take keer."

The old man meant every word he said, no doubt about it. Watching him closely, Skyline got the impression he wanted to say a lot more but hesitated to do so, which strengthened his conviction that there was something mysterious about the sheriff's relations with his dandified deputy. But Skyline Jackson simply couldn't see the necessity for bloodshed in order to smooth out an incident that, in his estimation, amounted to nothing more serious than a double-barreled practical joke.

He grinned at Old Kick and the girl. "Mistah Tempton may be the big bull rattler in these here mountains, and it's hunky dory with me. I cain't see no call for me and him to swap lead jest 'cause he made a hostile pass at me and I fed him a mouthful of wet dog."

His flippancy brought no response from Jessie or Kickapoo Joe. In fact, it had the opposite effect upon her. She glanced anxiously at the slowly approaching rider, then turned to Skyline almost fiercely.

"Don't be foolish!" she exclaimed in a low voice. "I can't tell you who we think he is, but please, Skyline, don't take chances with him. Go to the house and stay there until we get rid of him."

The tall rider's face went suddenly hard, but he said nothing. Dropping his rope over the saddle horn, he turned and walked leisurely toward the house. He felt five pairs of eyes upon him, but he didn't see the surprise and the faint shadow of disappointment that flashed across Jessie's face, quickly followed by a look of relief. A disgusted but inarticulate sound rumbled deep in the old sheriff's chest. He glared at his new hand's long back as if he'd love to plant a bullet squarely in the middle of it.

Skyline Jackson was hurt. In his opinion, Old Kick's warning was right and proper; but she just the same as told him to run from Tempton.

As far as he, personally, was concerned—there was no longer any doubt in Skyline's mind regarding the nature of his job at the Dead Indian ranch. Kickapoo Joe hired his guns, gentling horses being nothing more than an incidental pastime. Therefore it naturally followed that the slick old sheriff had work for him which he wouldn't trust to Tempton, and while shoving this thought

around, Skyline's suspicious mind just about concluded that Old Kick figured Bart was mixed up with the thieves and aimed to give the dandy rope enough to hang himself.

Ambling along slowly, Skyline Jackson took off his hat and scratched his red head, and cussed. He liked this country and the old sheriff, and he was sure enough in love with the girl. All three of them were in trouble, he reflected—the country, the sheriff, and the girl. Damned if it wouldn't take more than a fancy, gun-totin' dude to haze him out of these hills. In spite of hell, he'd be here when the smoke cleared away.

LOOKING down the trail at Bart Tempton, Skyline saw that he had plenty of time, so he didn't hurry. He went up to the big room, took his belts from a nail on the wall, buckled them around his narrow hips, and carefully adjusted his holsters to their customary height and angle. Several times he dropped a hand to each of the guns, right and left in turn. He carefully tried the action of his six-shooters, now glad that he had taken time to clean and oil them before breakfast this morning.

By watching him through a window, Skyline was able to time his departure from the house so as to reach the corral a few moments before Tempton arrived. It gave him a thrill of malicious satisfaction to see the play of emotions on Jessie's face when he came around the corner of the stable.

With guns in old holsters at either side, looking like familiar tools of his trade, Skyline Jackson was no longer the happy-go-lucky bronc rider. The good nature in his long face was now sardonic humor that made him an older man—cold, and perhaps ruthless. Unconsciously he looked and acted the part of a gunfighter, a killer if need be.

"Why, Skyline!" Jessie gasped.

Kickapoo Joe jerked around. His old eyes flashed. He grinned proudly at the girl. "I knowed it! Ever so often a hoss fools me, but I know men."

Tempton was almost within speaking distance. The old man glanced at him without turning his head. He lowered his voice and spoke rapidly to Skyline, "If they's any way 'round it, mind you, I'd a heap ruther nobody got hurt serious."

For a brief instant the lean rider's hard blue eyes appeared to be reading the old sheriff's thoughts. He nodded curtly. "I savvy. It all depends."

Kickapoo Joe gave Bart a hearty welcome, and Jessie was almost as cordial as her father; but Skyline and the three hands confined themselves to brief "Howdy's."

Tempton glanced just once at Skyline when he rode up, a look of mingled surprise and curiosity. Thereafter he ignored the tall horseman. Apparently in a high good humor, he distributed pleasantries to the other men and paid the girl a compliment with an ease and grace that suggested much practice.

Studying the man in the light of what Kickapoo Joe had said about him, Skyline revised his opinion of Bart Tempton. No doubt about it, the fellow was a lot more of a man than he appeared to be yesterday. There was strength in his handsome face, and cleverness in his alert black eyes. He looked neither like a dude nor a desperado. He more closely resembled a prosperous cowman who chose to dress in the extreme of range fashion, regardless of what others might think about his clothing. He sat his big black gelding with an air of supreme confidence that was bound to command respect.

Dismounting, Bart talked at random with Jessie and Old Kick for a while. Among other things, he said that Hugo Muench came in to town early this morning and reported the loss of a span of fine mules, stolen from his small pasture the night before.

The old sheriff looked away. His face was serious.

"Too blamed bad," he mused. "Hugo's havin' a hard time gittin' along. He cain't afford to lose them mules. We gotta do somethin' 'bout this here thievin'."

"We shore have," agreed Bart. "Why not let me ride the hills for a while? Maybe I can find out somethin'."

Kickapoo Joe slowly shook his head. "Nope, that's my job. You jest ride herd on the boys in town."

"Suits me," said Tempton. "You're the boss."

Suddenly he looked at Skyline. His steady eyes swept the tall horseman from head to foot, scornfully, a bit humorously.

The redhead felt himself grow hot beneath that calm inspection.

"And I've got some more news," remarked the big deputy to Jessie and Old Kick. "Bucky got drunk last night."

The girl bit her lip.

"Wouldn't be at all surprised," drawled the sheriff. "Bucky shore likes his liquor."

Bart smiled contentedly. "I found that out, and I found out that he talks when he's drunk." He darted a glance at Skyline. "Yes sah, he sure talks. He told me that he lied to you about the cowboy that stirred up all the excitement in Santone."

"The ornery cuss!" exclaimed Old Kick. "And I reckon he told you the truth."

"Strikes me that he did," drawled Tempton. "He said they're lookin' for a feller that's better than six feet tall, redheaded and horse-faced."

"You don't mean it," remarked the old man. "I cain't eemagin ary fella lookin' like that."

Tempton put his hands on his hips. He spoke to the sheriff, but he stared at Skyline. His large eyes lengthened and narrowed. "Well I can. There he stands."

Jessie audibly caught her breath. Kickapoo Joe folded his arms and looked calmly from one man to the other, saying nothing.

Skyline Jackson walked closer to Bart, lounging along in his careless, loose-jointed fashion. "What you aimin' to do 'bout it, Mistah Tempton?"

Bart ignored the question. He spoke directly to the sheriff. "This feller's a wanted man. We'd ought to arrest him and collect the reward."

Old Kick's face hardened a trifle. "Bart, I ain't arrestin' no man on the word of a drunk." He paused briefly, looking off in the direction of Bandera. "I'm sorta wonderin' whether Bucky got high and done his talkin' in George Hay's saloon."

Tempton smiled wisely. "Nope, Bucky drank and talked in my room at the hotel." He glanced insolently at Skyline. "And I don't mind sayin' it was my liquor that made him talk."

"Mmmm-huh," muttered the old sheriff. "That's what I allowed."

The deputy's dark face flushed, but he stood his ground. "I ain't ashamed of it. I figgered there'd be a bounty on this feller's scalp, and we might as well get it."

Old Kick stroked his chin and gazed thoughtfully at the horizon.

"We need the money, all right," he drawled, "but even if he was guilty, I jest nacherally cain't feel hard towards a fella that ducks a fat politician these days, 'cause they's a whole slew of 'em that shore needs baptizin' a-plenty."

He paused looking steadily at Skyline for a moment. Then he turned to the deputy, "But Bart, you're a officer of the law. If you figger this here pilgrim needs arrestin', jest go ahead."

SKYLINE stood with arms folded, in the attitude of a man waiting patiently. His face was emotionless, but his hard blue eyes were on the alert to catch every move the deputy made.

Tempton was somewhat taken aback, but he quickly recovered his poise. Turning to Skyline with a lofty air, he said, "You heard what the sheriff—"

"Better hold yo' hosses, mistah," drawled the lanky rider. "Have you got a warrant?"

"No! Don't need one."

"I sorta calc'late you do," lazily declared the redhead. "Fact is, you cain't arrest me without a warrant."

Having made that remark with the deliberate intention of crowding Tempton into action, he was prepared for what followed. Guided by the trained faculties of a gunfighter, he knew that Bart was starting his draw before his hand made a move. By the time Tempton's fingers closed on the handle of his gun, he was looking into the muzzle of Skyline's Colt.

"H'ist 'em!" barked the tall man. "Reach!"

Bart Tempton proved he was no fool. His hands quickly came up to the level of his chin. He said quietly, "Redhead, you better shoot me down now while you got a chance, 'cause there'll be another time if you don't. What's it goin' to be?"

Skyline Jackson holstered his gun. He made a quick gesture with his empty hand and snapped scornfully, "Fork yo' hoss and git!"

The contempt with which he issued the order brought a flush to Bart Tempton's handsome face. For a moment it appeared his rage might break loose in the form of further violence, but the man controlled himself with a tight rein. In the space of a breath he recovered his composure, tipped his hat to Jessie, and nodded courteously to the sheriff.

Skyline's thoughts clicked into place with great rapidity. He knew that Tempton was a treacherous cuss, and he figured now was the time to prove it. So he made a move to turn away when the deputy picked up his reins. Like a flash, Tempton whipped out a gun.

Then the tall rider resorted to one of those tricks of gunplay which a man may practice for years, and use but once in a lifetime. Standing with his right side toward his antagonist, he drew his left-hand Colt and fired across the front of his body without turning, belt high.

An instant after Tempton's gun left its holster, Skyline's bullet gouged a furrow across his chest on a level with his heart. He lurched backward. The bullet grazed the under side of his horse's neck and it plunged away. He convulsively sent a shot into the ground, and his six-shooter jerked from his hand.

He tore at the front of his shirt. Jessie and Kickapoo Joe ran to him. The three hands also went over, Henry Schott staring at Skyline and muttering in amazement, "Good Lord! Five times as fast as chain lightnin'."

The lanky horseman watched the group in silence. He reloaded the empty chamber of his gun and returned it to its holster. At the moment he didn't know whether Bart was mortally wounded, but he hoped not. The next instant he cussed himself for being chicken-hearted. If the fellow was killed off, maybe Old Kick's troubles would end. He wasn't kept in doubt very long.

"It ain't much more'n a scratch," he heard Bart Tempton say. "If you'll take me to the house and tie me up, I'll go back to town."

As he walked off with the sheriff on one side leading his horse and Jessie on the other, the big deputy called over his shoulder, "Fast shootin', redhead. I'll be seein' you again sometime."

CHAPTER III

NIGHT RAIDER

SKYLINE JACKSON and the three hands hunkered down against the corral fence. They smoked and talked about everything but the fight, until

they saw Tempton ride away from the house. Aside from the fact that he sat straighter and stiffer than usual, the wounded deputy seemed to be none the worse.

"Rides like he'd done took to wearin' corsets," observed Hank.

"Huh," Tom Cross grunted. "Rides like he'd been shot."

"I'd say," cautiously remarked Fred Greiner, "that he rides like a fella that's smart enough to know when he's licked, and slick enough to watch for another chance."

Since Skyline said nothing, the boys were quick to understand that he didn't care to talk about the fight.

So Tom changed the subject. "He's slick, all right, but he ain't half as slick as the ghost hoss thief that's been raisin' hell in this country for better'n a year."

That made the redhead pick up his ears.

"Out in the Devil's River country we got us some good ghosts," he drawled, "but we ain't never had to hang none of 'em for stealin' hosses. What you talkin' 'bout?"

Tom was in earnest when he went on to say, "We'd shore hang this'n if we could ever ketch it, but we can't even see the blasted thing."

"Out in the Devil's River country," allowed Skyline, "we figger 'tain't much of a ghost if we cain't see it, or leastwise hear it."

"We can hear this'n, all right."

"What does it sound like?"

"A whistle," answered Tom. "A sharp whistle."

"Uh-huh," mused the lanky twister. "Must be a young ghost—mebbe a yearlin'. A Devil's River ghost whistles until he's a two-year-old, then he howls until—"

"Listen here!" exclaimed Tom. "I ain't funnin'. Charley Thomas' two boys was the first ones to run onto it. Better'n a year ago they was out coon huntin' one night and they come up out'n a sag 'bout quarter of a mile from where ten or a dozen hosses was a-grazin'. Just then they heard a whistle, and the hosses stampeded straight at the place where that whistle come from. Next day Charley and the boys trailed 'em until they scattered to hell and gone in the hills, and nobody ain't seen hide nor hair of 'em since. That's the truth, so help me."

"It shore is," said Fred Greiner. "And two other fellers has seen the same durned thing happen. One of 'em was a-ridin' him a hoss at the time, so he lit out after the stampede; but he didn't foller 'em very far."

"How come?" asked Skyline.

"Lead," answered Greiner. "That whistlin' ghost sent lead a-whistlin' 'round his ears, so he stopped sudden. But to this day, he swears there wa'n't nothin' or nobody after them hosses when they started to run. Jest that blamed whistle a-snakin' 'em towards it."

A slow grin split the lower half of Skyline's long face. The grin got wider and wider until he burst out laughing. At first, Tom and Fred looked cheap. A moment later, they looked as if they were about to lay hands on the mirthful redhead.

"Hold on a minute, fellas," he pleaded. "Jest you gimme time to sorta git my wind, and I'll tell you-all 'bout a Devil's River ghost that can whop hell out'n any Bandera ghost you ever—"

A bellow interrupted him. "Jessie, take a squint at our hard-workin' hands. Broncs in the pen with tears in their eyes, jest a-beggin' this here peeler to come and gentle 'em, and there he sets —jest a-settin'."

Skyline grinned, crushed his cigarette under his heel, and got up in sections. "Takes time for a fella to git up enough nerve to tackle a Devil's River bronc, and that's what I was doin'."

The girl's face showed the strain of

the recent excitement, but the old man was frisky as a colt.

Skyline unbuckled his guns, hung them on a corral picket, and again took down his rope. "Which one of them pet colts d'you want unraveled fust?"

Evidently Jessie was rapidly taking hold of herself. She spoke up, "Joe gave me one of those ponies, Skyline, and I hope you'll do an extra good job of gentling him."

"Shore did," declared the old man. "I let Jessie have the leetle dun that's over there swappin lies with Old Nosey's colt. Ain't he purty?"

"Mmmm-huh," muttered Skyline. "I got idees 'bout any man that'd give a gal a pony like that there hunk of fightin' hoss-flesh. He's the meanest one here."

He moved around to where he could get a good look at the dun. "And say, he's been rode, or tried to be rode."

Hank Schott slouched in his saddle a rod or so away. Jessie smiled slyly at him. Hank got very red.

Old Kick chuckled all over. "Tried to be is right. Fust off, we had to call in all the neighbors to help us git a saddle on the leetle devil. Then Hank forked him 'bout ten in the mawnin' and got throwed so durned high, he had to scratch gravel to git back down to earth in time for supper. Sence then, they ain't nobody pestered me to let 'em ride the dun."

Hell of a way to go about gentling a horse like that salty little cuss, thought Skyline. Probably hadn't felt a rope since the day he was branded. He asked the old man where to find a hackamore and stake rope.

"Boys, fetch him what he wants," Old Kick called out. "Help him all you dare to, then climb a big tree and watch a Devil's River man ride a Devil's River colt."

The redhead laughed to himself. These folks were due to get a surprise. As he went through the gate, he drawled over his shoulder, "Much obliged, but I don't need no help." He glanced at Jessie and added, "if that there flea-bitten runt of a dun gits uppity with me, I'll shove him in my britches pocket and set on him."

Her chin went up a notch. "I hope he throws you good and hard."

The lanky twister grinned amiably. While putting up a small loop, he told Cloudbust through the fence, "D'you hear that, old fella? It might be a pious idee for us to let that there kittle-bellied scrub pile us, jest to make some folks feel good."

THE ponies were bunched against the pickets as far as possible away from Skyline, every ear pointing in his direction. In the front rank stood the little dun, head high and nostrils expanded. Muscles rippled beneath his sleek hide as if he was just looking for an excuse to take to the air. The tall

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rider's freckled face broke into a friendly grin. He spoke to the pony; and following the ancient custom of horse-breakers, he gave it a name that might stay with it as long as it lived.

"Howdy, Streak, you wuthless old son-of-a-gun," he drawled quietly. "Look me over good, 'cause you're due to see a heap more of me from now on."

All his motions were languid, tending to pacify rather than to arouse; and when he ambled toward the ponies, carelessly trailing the loop, he did it in a way that seemed to suggest no cause for excitement. Streak snorted and dived back into the bunch. Skyline grinned and went right on.

He bore a little to the left, so that when the ponies tried to avoid him, they of necessity strung out and tore along the fence on his right. For the first time, he moved fast. As the dun came by he took a quick step toward it, his long arm whipped out, and the hard-twist rope shot through the air as straight and stiff as a small iron bar with a ring at its end. The loop dropped over Streak's head and snapped tight, high on his throat. The next instant Skyline had the rope drawn partially around his left hip with his weight against it. His high heels gouged furrows in the ground.

In this fashion, the little dun's first lesson began. He wasn't thrown and he wasn't snubbed and allowed to choke himself down; but he couldn't get all the air he needed to act up the way he wanted to. Since it had him right behind the jaw, the rope cut down his leverage until he couldn't do much with the hundred eighty pounds of bone and hard muscle at the end of it—a fellow who grinned at him all the time, and knew just how and when to upset his balance.

Man and horse covered some territory and kicked up a lot of dust, but nobody was hurt, and as soon as Streak got over his first frenzy, Skyline began to walk up on the rope. Talking steadily in a low, soothing voice, he went almost to within arm's reach of the pony and stopped. There he stood for a moment, cussing Streak affectionately. Then he backed off slowly and picked up the hackamore, which he had dropped near the snubbing post. His second trip up the rope was easier than the first, and the dun made the mistake of letting him get too close. In a twinkling the big rider got him by the ears, jerked his head down, and slipped the hackamore into place before he had time to do any serious damage; but his hoof did strike Skyline's leg a glancing blow that nearly ended the lesson.

The redhead hobbled away, panting and grimacing.

"You're all-fired promiscuous with them front feet, you leetle devil," he drawled quietly. "But it's my own fault for gittin' keerless, so they's no hard feelin's."

Jessie North saw it happen and heard what he said. Her face lit up and her eyes moistened.

Old Kick cussed admiringly beneath his breath.

"To see him now," he quietly told the girl, "a fella wouldn't never suspicion he's the pizen gun-slinger that mighty nigh ruint Bart Tempton."

Working with the forbearance of a man who rarely lost patience with a horse, and the skill of one who knew the workings of a pony's mind, it wasn't long before Skyline rode away from the corral on Cloudbust with the little dun's rope dallied about his saddle horn. The big roan actually seemed to take an interest in the job of gentling this wild pony, for every time Streak tried to go places Cloudbust showed him how foolish he was; and he appeared to do it in the firm but indulgent fashion with which Skyline himself went about it. All the while the freckled horseman talked to the dun in a lazy, humorous voice as he might have talked to an unruly boy who wasn't naturally vicious. Gradually

"If he throws you, he's shore to figger he can do it next time."

Streak expended less and less effort in fighting the rope, suffering himself to be led rather than dragged back to the corral.

Jessie greeted Skyline pleasantly, but Old Kick scowled ferociously. However, the scowl failed to hide the twinkle behind it.

"Well," he rumbled, "have we gotta wait here all day to see you straddle that there bronc?"

"Far as this here leetle fella is consarned," retorted Skyline, "you done seen all you'll git to see today. I'm agentlin' him for a lady, so he's due to git his education slow and easy. If I had as much to larn as he has, I'd need a week to do it in; but I allow he's got a few more brains than I got, so I'll give him maybe fo'-five days at the outside."

The girl heartily approved the plan, and Skyline figured that Old Kick did, too, although he pretended to be disappointed and growled something about a waste of time.

The lanky twister stood in one stirrup and grinned at him.

"If time is so all-fired precious," he drawled, "tell you what I'll do with the balance of them broncs. I'll rope 'em and throw 'em and slap a saddle on 'em and ride 'em plumb into the ground, one right after the other; but what I mean, that ain't never no way to gentle a hoss. What say?"

The old man made a show of bristling up.

"Jest you let me ketch you ridin' one of my pet colts plumb into the ground!" He mounted his own horse, winked at Jessie, and continued, "Nuss 'em along gentle so's not to hurt their tender feelin's, and likewise—so's to stay at the Dead Injun as long as you can."

Skyline kneed Cloudbust around and they went away from there, taking Streak with them. Out on the open ground which surrounded headquarters, he tied the pony's stake rope to a small log that had been snaked up for fire-

wood. Streak could drag it around while grazing, but he couldn't run with it; and there Skyline left him to think it over and gradually become reconciled to captivity.

THEREAFTER for days, nothing occurred to interrupt the tall horseman's work with his broncs. Kickapoo Joe was away nearly all the while, and Jessie spent more and more of her time with Skyline. She was with him when he first rode Streak, and she couldn't get over the fact that he had but little difficulty in keeping the dun from pitching. In fact, few of the horses he rode made any serious efforts to buck. One day when they were riding north to the pass—Jessie on her fiery bay and Skyline on Streak, who was getting to be a finely behaved little horse—she asked him why, since he could ride most anything, he went to such lengths to keep a horse from pitching in earnest.

"'Cause if he throws you, he's shore to figger he can do it next time," drawled Skyline; "and if he don't do it the fust time, he may turn out to be a stubborn cuss who'll jest keep on a-tryin' until he's plumb spoilt."

Then he went on to tell her that most folks didn't know how a wild pony's mind worked: how mad it made him to get penned up, when all his life he'd had the whole world to run in; how much it shocked his high-strung nerves to be roped and thrown hard enough to knock the breath out of him, or snubbed and allowed to choke himself until he couldn't stand up; how it nearly drove him crazy with fright when he found out he was hogtied and couldn't run away from the two-legged critter which his mammy and all the other horses had taught him to fear: and how he must feel when something fastened onto his back, maybe making him think of the time a panther crawled him and sunk its claws into him, and he had to pitch like the very devil to get shed of the brute.

"Nope, Jessie, most folks don't think of such things," said Skyline in conclusion, "and that's why they break a pony even when they got plenty time and really want to gentle him."

So it went, day after day, until Skyline swore to himself that this was heaven—a-workin' on good tough broncs, and a-ridin' with the finest girl he ever knew. There were times when he suspected she was frankly studying him; perhaps taking his measure; but it made no difference to Skyline Jackson, for he'd be himself and act natural, regardless. He had no way of knowing that this unaffectedness slowly but surely drew the girl to him. But he knew one thing: all this was simply too good to last.

Therefore he wasn't surprised when, at last, he caught the feel of trouble in the air. Kickapoo Joe came home at noon that day, dog tired and obviously worried, after having been away for more than twenty-four hours; and the first thing he did was to call Skyline aside for a confidential talk.

"Most any time now," he began, "the Dead Injun is due to have company."

"I like company."

"So do I," dryly remarked the old sheriff, "but not the kind that comes in the middle of the night. A sartin leetle Mexican shaver who thinks I'm God Almighty, jest as good as told me that inside of two three days I'll lose some hosses if I ain't mighty keerful. That's all he said, and I had sense enough not to ask the boy no questions."

Skyline nodded.

"If it's all the same to you," he drawled, "I'd sorta like to ketch up on my moonlight ridin'. I shore do like the moon you got up here in yo' mountains."

Old Kick grinned. "Mighty fine idee. It don't never do for a fella to git behind with his moonlight ridin'."

For several moments he stared hard

at the western rim of the valley. "Ain't much I can tell you now, 'cause suspicions ain't wuth a damn. But some'res off in them hills, they's a place where thieves hold stuff. It cain't be very big, 'cause I done combed that there country keerful and ain't never found it. Reckon the only thing to do is to follow 'em when they're makin' off with some hosses, but fust thing you gotta do is to ketch 'em at it. So far, I cain't. Here's hopin' you do."

Skyline said he'd do the best he could, then changed the subject. "I been thinkin'—Bart Tempton must be up and around by now."

Kickapoo Joe looked sharply at him. "Uh-huh, he's back on his feed, plumb cured."

"D'you reckon he holds anything agin you?"

"Why should he?" the old man snapped. "He brung it on hisself. But he don't seem to. Fact is, he's a mite more friendly than he used to be. Says he figgers mebbe he made a mistake by believin' what Bucky said 'bout that there Santone desperado."

"He does!" exclaimed Skyline. "I'm shore glad I cut loose so fast I come close to missin' Bart that time."

"Mmmm-huh, that's what he says," drawled Old Kick. "So bright and early this mawnin', he hit out for Santone to git the straight of it."

Skyline Jackson cussed manfully.

AFTER some discussion it was decided that, of the six bands of horses roaming the Dead Indian range, Old Nosey's remuda would be the most promising bait for thieves. That band grazed closest to the hills on the west, and contained some of the best animals. Skyline knew where they watered and about where to find them shortly after dark, so he concluded to stay at headquarters while it was still light enough for a spy to see him.

Moreover, he had another reason for delaying his departure. During the past three long days and nights, he'd been trying to bolster his courage to the point where he could have a little talk with Jessie about a matter more serious than horses, cows, thieves, and related things. It seemed that every time he got just about ready to speak his piece, something stampeded him and he tore away from the subject like a wild mustang away from a gate. It was commencing to get him riled at himself. For years he hadn't been spooky around girls, and there was no good reason why he should be so flighty when Jessie was near. Why, he got along with her a heap better than any other girl he had ever known. It was going to be different this time—no foolin'.

Pursuant to this conviction, shortly after sundown he asked her to go to the corral with him and they'd give Streak a looking over before dark.

Jessie was in the kitchen by herself, straining milk. The lamplight danced in the sheen of her hair and the depths of her large, black eyes when she looked up at him with a little smile.

"I've seen that pony a dozen times today," she said softly, "so what are you up to now?"

Shore wasn't making it any easier on a fella, he thought grimly. But he hitched up his belt and somehow made his voice behave.

"Wel-l-l, you see it's like this," he drawled. "I'm a-fixin' to hit the trail—and befo' I go, I got some things to tell you 'bout—" He shied off, then plunged desperately away. "—'bout that there apron-faced, wind-broke dun of yo'r'n!"

Skyline Jackson afterwards wondered what in the hell would've become of him if Old Kick hadn't come a-rampsin' into the kitchen before Jessie any more than got started to laughing good.

"Say," the old man bellowed. "I mighty nigh forgot somethin'. Hold up yo right hand."

The lanky redhead was so flustered he couldn't move.

"Go ahead. H'ist it! No, you durned idjit, yo' *right* hand."

At last Skyline elevated his right fist to a point slightly above his waist.

"Bully!" exclaimed Kickapoo Joe. "Now you're a deppity sheriff. But mind you, you don't git no extry wages, and don't you waste my time argyin', 'cause I gotta ketch up a fresh hoss and do some ridin' myownself."

In silence Skyline watched him leave the room. Then he looked down his long nose at Jessie and grinned dryly, for he was himself again. "No more wages. Betcha the old skinflint won't even buy me my ca'tridges. But I aim to take the job and like it."

Before he knew what she was doing, her fingers tightened on his arm. "Skyline, I want you to go. But be careful, because—well, because you've still got some broncs to gentle."

So Travis Crockett Jackson rode away from the Dead Indian ranch that evening with his head dodging stars, and his mind on matters more pleasant than the pursuit of horse thieves.

It was well after midnight when Skyline got his first hint that there were strangers on the Dead Indian range. Seated in a deep shadow beneath a trio of dense oaks, at the edge of an open prairie where Old Nosey's band was feeding on grass that reached above a horse's knees, he suddenly heard a noise that had no place in the night sounds to which he had listened for hours.

A sharp whistle—not loud, but penetrating!

He held his breath. In the bright moonlight, he saw every horse lift its head and cock its ears toward the timber bordering the prairie two hundred yards to the west. He felt a pull on the hackamore rope in his hand. Cloudbust had stopped grazing in the tiny opening behind him, and thrown up his head to investigate the alien sound. Suddenly the big horse expelled his breath in an explosive snort that made Skyline jump to his feet. An instant later the remuda stampeded, and they ran toward the whistle!

Tearing through grass that at times brushed their sides, it almost seemed that Old Nosey was leading her band in an attack upon the source of the whistle. The tall rider shook his head to clear the sleep from his eyes. He couldn't believe it, but at the same time he knew it was true: somewhere out yonder, the horse-stealing ghost was at work!

The horses raced westward, and disappeared through an opening in the timber. Skyline hit the saddle, determined to follow at a safe distance until he discovered where they were going and what was driving them onward.

ALONG about four o'clock in the afternoon two days later, some people were gathered on the porch of the Carmichael and Hay store in Bandera. In the center of the group stood Jessie North, Kickapoo Joe, and Bart Tempton. The old man was in a particularly good humor, but the girl's face lacked its usual vivacity, and Bart Tempton's mirth seemed to be more or less forced.

A short time before, Old Kick had casually remarked that he was in the Bexar County sheriff's office yesterday, and they told him that Bart hadn't been there. To which Tempton promptly replied that he visited the chief of police and didn't go near the sheriff, since the assault on the Senator was a city matter.

"In the old days," Kickapoo Joe went on to say, "me and Sheriff Tom Smith fit Injuns in the same Ranger company. I was a sa'jint and he was a wuthless private. I shore wish you-all could've seen Tom's face when I busted into his office and let out a beller somethin' like this, 'Tom Smith, what the devil do you mean by puttin' a bounty on my bronc peeler's scalp?' Tom, he sorta blinked

his eyes two three times, then he comes right back, 'Blast yo' scaly old hide, Kickapoo Joe, ever sence I knowed you they's been bounties on yo' hair in mighty nigh every county in Texas.' Next thing, Tom tells his clerk to go fetch the jug he took off'n Curly Doak when he rounded Curly up for drinkin' too much intoxicatin' liquor befo' supper. Anyhow, one word led to another, and to make a long story short, me and Tom played the jug and fit, and played the jug and argied 'bout this here new hand of mine. Finally we got it fixed up so's that all the cuss has to do is to stay plumb away from Bexar County ontil that there fat Senator got back to his home range. And fellas, I'm a-tellin' you that jest goes to show what a leetle diplomacy and a good jug can do."

"But from what Miss Jessie was sayin' yesterday," suggested Paul Schneider, who stood nearby with a double-barreled shotgun under his arm, "you done wasted a heap of time, 'cause your new hand took to the tall timbers the other night."

Old Kick regretfully shook his head. "Yes sah, that's a fact, and I hated to lose the ornery jasper. Best hand with a bronc I ever seen."

While talking he took the shotgun from Schneider, looked it over curiously, and balanced it in the crook of his left arm. Perhaps but one man noticed that its muzzle was aimed at a point in the regions of Tempton's waistline, and that man was Bart himself. The muscles of his face perceptibly tightened.

Kickapoo Joe talked on, "The Good Lawd give that there redhead a face like a hoss and mebbe a mite more sense than a mustang, so a bronc jest nacherally takes to him. I been sorta hopin' that he could talk a pony's langwidge, and maybeso find out who's the hoss thief that's causin' us so much trouble. But now that he's gone, reckon I'll have to do the best I can. So I'm takin' a chance and—"

At this point he was interrupted by a bareheaded boy riding bareback on a lumbering work horse, who came pounding down the street. He slid off at the store and shot under the rack like a frightened terrier.

The youngster pushed his way through to Old Kick, his eyes like saucers. "Oh Mister North! That new hand of your'n is comin' down the trail on his big horse, drivin' a pony with a Mexican a-straddle of it. I don't know the Mexican but he looks like a horse thief. Your hand said he wasn't, but I think he's a liar, and he's comin' right smack into town with the Mexican!"

By the time the boy had said six words, the old sheriff had both barrels of the shotgun at full cock. Tempton seemed unable to tear his eyes from the yawning mouth of the old muzzle-loader. He kept his arms folded with obvious caution.

Jessie made no secret of the fact that she was elated. She went out to the rack and looked anxiously down the street. Apparently at the point of riding to meet Skyline, she glanced at her pony. It dozed at the rack in front of the hotel, a side saddle on its back and a black riding-skirt thrown across the saddle, the stirrup hooked over a horn to hold it there.

"Calc'late you'd better go pilot him in, Jessie," the old man said.

Everybody watched a bend in the trail a short distance away where it came through some timber. Bart Tempton nervously hitched his weight from one leg to the other. His spurs tinkled.

Kickapoo Joe stroked the stock of the shotgun. He tilted it from side to side on his arm, examining the engraving on its barrel, but its aim didn't falter.

"Fred, you got you a mighty fine lookin' scatter-gun, he drawled. "Fixin' to go after quail?"

"Nope. My old lady said she was a mind to roast a turkey."

"Uh-huh, loaded for turkey," mused

the old man with a quick glance at his deputy. "A while back, I helped to gether up all that was left of a pore cuss that caught both barrels of a turkey load at short range. Never will forgit it."

Bart Tempton moistened his lips.

SHE and Schneider were about the only ones who heard this remark, for everyone else was gazing down the street. Skyline Jackson was coming into town, riding Cloudbust and herding a villainous looking Mexican on a ramshackle buckskin pony.

With his face unshaven and heavily powdered with dust, not to mention a red scratch from his temple to a point beneath his chin, Skyline resembled a man who had lately ridden out a stampede. But his old hat rode at a cocky angle, well over one ear. He growled something in Spanish and the Mexican swung in to the rack at the store.

Old Kick moved back to where he could keep an eye on Tempton, at the same time taking a side glance at the street.

"Howdy, stranger!" he boomed.

"How're you, folks," answered Skyline, looking at no one but Jessie.

She stepped down from the porch and out to the rack. There was something brave in this public announcement of her concern.

"Are you all right, Skyline?" she asked.

"I'm a-r'arin' to go."

"And you got what you went after?" she inquired in a low, firm voice.

"Yes'm, reckon I did."

Skyline Jackson dismounted somewhat awkwardly, for he had a gunnysack over his shoulder and it seemed to have something in it. Jessie watched him curiously when he placed the sack under the edge of the porch; but the men had their eyes on the Mexican. He sat still, for his feet were hobbled beneath the belly of his horse.

"Where in Sam Houston have you been?" demanded Kickapoo Joe.

The lanky rider glanced over his shoulder with a slow grin. "No place in partic'lar. Jest a-ridin' 'round."

"What you got on the buckskin?" inquired the sheriff.

Skyline took the time to finish loosening his cinches; then he followed Jessie onto the porch.

"You mean that there Mex?" he blandly inquired. "He's jest a hoss thief I snagged back yander in the hills."

Old Kick made the muzzle of the shotgun waver slightly, but significantly.

"Jedgin' by his looks, I'd say he's a thief all right," said the sheriff, "but what you got to prove it?"

Skyline lazily waved a hand in the general direction of the Dead Indian ranch. "I got plenty evidence, but it's scattered here and yander. I found him a-holdin' fo'ty fifty hosses and mules in a leetle box canyon over on the other side of the ridge, and I know they wa'n't his stuff 'cause I followed Old Nosey's ramoother into that there canyon. Reckon that's enough to hang the cuss, but if you want more evidence I can shore give it to you."

"Let's have it."

"Well, he up and told me he's a hoss thief," answered Skyline.

"Fiddlesticks!" snorted the old sheriff. "Don't you stand there and tell me you was able to make a Mexican talk."

The lanky bronc rider grinned. "Tain't wuth mentionin'. Why, out in the Devil's River country, we ketch us a hoss thief at noon and five minutes after he's done told all he knows."

Bart Tempton's dark eyes burned fiercely. He backed off a pace. Kickapoo Joe's face went suddenly as immobile as stone. His fingers caressed the triggers of the shotgun.

Skyline Jackson quickly walked to within arm's reach of the big deputy. The spectators pushed back out of the way. His expression was no longer

whimsically humorous—it was cold and hard and sternly accusing.

With his left hand, he brushed the barrel of the sheriff's gun aside. "This here polecat is my meat."

TEMPTON at once dropped his hands to his hips.

"Put up yo' fists," growled Skyline. "I aim to bust you in the jaw."

There may have been a shadow of desperation in the gunman's face, but it held no fear. Like a flash, he reached for his Colt.

Skyline's big fist drove upward to the point of his chin. The crushing force of the blow flung him back against the rock front of the store as his gun was leaving its holster. Knocked out cold, he didn't fire a shot. The tall horseman let him lie where he fell.

Skyline handed Tempton's guns to the sheriff. "He was with the Mex when they lifted Old Nosey's band the other night, and he helped drive 'em to the canyon; but he didn't stay there long."

"Mmmm-huh," mused Old Kick, staring down. "I suspicioned he was a hoss thief and I made him a deppity so's to fool him into thinkin' I didn't. Done rid myself to skin and bones, but never could ketch him at it."

Skyline went to the edge of the porch and got the sack. Untying it, he drawled, "Yes sah, Bart Tempton is a hoss thief, all right, but here's another thief that's a heap slicker'n Bart."

Sneezing and rubbing her eyes with her paws, Lady tumbled out onto the porch!

For an instant, the spectators were struck dumb. Jessie dropped to her knees, petting the little dog.

"And folks," continued Skyline, "she's yo' hoss-stealin' ghost. Bart simply stayed under kivver and sent her out to fetch him the hosses. She's such a leetle mite, nobody could see her at night if the grass was more'n a foot high."

Everybody fell to talking at once.

Jessie stood up. Skyline snapped his fingers and Lady went to him, showing her teeth in a canine grin and wagging her tail in the friendliest fashion.

Skyline patted her head and rumpled her ears. "Lady, you ain't no lady. You're a hoss thief."

The little dog wriggled apologetically, and whined.

He looked at Jessie, drawling, "Fed her mighty nigh all my grub befo' she'd have anything to do with me."

The girl's eyes were moist. That which he saw in them, sent blood rushing to the bashful redhead's face and neck and ears. He mentally kicked himself once more, for he tried to say something and couldn't.

Mirth played about the corners of Jessie's mouth. Looking him straight in the eye, she said in a gentle but tired voice, "Lady, go fetch him!"

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"We can't stand by and see people die!"

BULKHEAD BEAN

By Albert Richard Wetjen

CAPTAIN BEAN, currently master of the barkentine *Cockatoo,* heaved his fat bulk over the chart on the main cabin table and drew a tiny circle with his pencil.

"There," he announced amiably, "is where I'll drop her."

Peak-faced Mr. Askew, the Sydney shipowner, squinted his red-rimmed eyes upwards and demanded, "You're sure there's no chance of anything going wrong? I can't afford scandal."

"Not a chance," Captain Bean assured him heartily, his round face wreathed in smiles. "I know just the spot. Ram her on the reef . . . it runs steep to . . . and she'll slide back and go down in deep water. Then I take the crew to Honolulu in the boats, send you a cable, and you collect and send me my split."

"Well, you ought to know the business, from all reports," said Mr. Askew maliciously. "But if anything goes wrong, remember I'm in the clear."

"Nothing's going to go wrong," the captain soothed him. And candidly, as one potential criminal to another, "for that matter, I'm in worse'n you. I've got the upper holds and the deck space filled with my own junk listed as machinery and such, whereas it's mostly stones and scrap iron nicely cased. The legitimate cargo you got for our lower holds makes everything look on the level anyway, and there was no kick from the underwriters."

"There was about you," grunted Mr. Askew. "But they didn't think I'd stand for any funny business with my reputation, so they overlooked your record."

"That," said Captain Bean with dignity, "looks like a case for libel." He reached for the whiskey bottle.

Mr. Askew coughed and polished his glasses with a silk handkerchief.

"It may not be so very simple," he observed acidly. "That young man Larkin who is shipping his goods with us did so because I offered him scandalously low rates, and he happens to be broke, more or less. In fact, I heard he thought so much of this chance he even borrowed money to increase his shipment. Very bad business, I can assure you."

"Well, what's it to us?" demanded Captain Bean reasonably. "He was glad to ship cheap. We was glad to have him. Fills up the ship and makes everything nice. It's not our grief if he's crazy."

"Yes, I know," agreed Mr. Askew, "but it seems the young man's put all he has into this. Some idea of starting as a merchant in Honolulu. Couldn't even afford to insure. And what's worse, he insists on going along."

Captain Bean's jaw dropped. "Going along? You mean sailing with us?"

"With his goods," corrected Mr. Askew, "and naturally with you."

Captain Bean pushed back his uniform cap and scratched his bald head.

"Well," he grumbled, "it means I gotta be extra careful. Can't have him poking around too much."

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Askew. "So I thought I'd warn you. He's waiting to meet you now."

"You think of everything," complained the captain uneasily, and followed Mr. Askew to the main deck, where Mr. Jerrold Larkin, an alert-looking young man with red hair and candid blue eyes, was watching the cargo being hoisted from the lighters.

"Glad you could find room for me, Captain," he said briskly. "It means a great deal, I assure you. All I've got is stowed in the *Cockatoo* here, and I'm as nervous about it as a hen with eggs."

Captain Bean patted him on the shoulder. "Nothing can happen to your stuff, sir," he assured him heartily. "And we'll be glad of your company."

After seeing Mr. Askew to his launch, he returned to the main cabin to find his mate, a gaunt, solemn-faced man—who was, surprisingly, his brother—leaning over the chart.

"All set?" asked the mate gloomily.

"All set," agreed Captain Bean. He helped himself to a whiskey. "The old coot had the jitters and wanted to back out, but I talked him round. Anyway, he hates to lose money worse'n I do. We'll sail with the next tide."

"You certainly got a way with you," his brother admitted grudgingly. "Getting a respectable old duck like Askew to agree to sink a ship for the insurance."

"Case of have to," the captain grunted. "We was broke and no chance of a berth—not after the *Bluebird* affair, anyway—and I heard Askew was stuck with this barkentine. Took her in payment of a bad debt, and what was he going to do with her? Last windjammer on the coast. I told him she'd never pass another survey and if he didn't want to burn her for the copper in her he'd better take a chance and let me have her for a last run."

"Well, here's hoping," said the mate, taking a drink.

"More'n that," said the captain. "We gotta take this Larkin guy along. The feller who chartered the lower hold space. Seems like he's busted, so he wants to travel cheap and sit tight on his belongings, which is mortgaged anyway."

Jed rubbed a bony jaw and grunted. "If he's a sailor it's bad; if he ain't—so what?"

"That's something," agreed the captain, brightening. "You know, this is my last voyage, Jed, so maybe I'm jumpy. The game's about played out. I aim to settle in the States and lead a respectable life. My reputation's not what it used to be."

He was somewhat correct in that. For thirty-odd years Captain Bean had bluffed, cajoled and swindled his way through life. He had done everything from running guns to smuggling opium and aliens. He had been master of a missionary schooner in which he had persuaded a wealthy and pious old lady to invest; altering her rig and name, he had sold her to a Chinaman in Singapore after reporting her lost. He was said to have a better knowledge of the tricks of marine law than most marine lawyers, and his name was faintly odorous from Shanghai to Cape Town and ports between, where he was known, not unaffectionately, as Bulkhead Bean, from his habit of blaming faulty bulkheads for every wreck and any spoilage of cargo.

He had an uncanny faculty for having mild collisions at odd times and in odd places, in all of which he was able to prove himself in the right and collect damages, which kept his ships in good repair. Once, hard up and with a condemned ship under him, he had hove to off a certain coast on a misty night, carefully hoisted the anchor of a light-buoy guarding a reef, removed the buoy a mile or so down the coast, and then, steaming in next morning with a dozen other ships to witness, had naturally piled up. He collected damages on the grounds that the buoy must have dragged—and anyway, it was the government's business to see that aids to navigation were in their proper places, and that mariners should be immediately notified if they were not. He was a remarkable man.

THE advent of Mr. Jerrold Larkin upon the *Cockatoo* presented no major difficulties at first. In the beginning Captain Bean had been slightly apprehensive that he might, as Jed had hinted, have been a sailor, in which case some awkward questions might have been asked. As, for instance, why apparently heavy cased machinery should be placed in the upper holds over a cargo of light goods. But no such technical matters arose, seeing that Mr. Larkin had been something in dry-goods and curios in Sydney and had never before taken a voyage. Which was gratifying. After it was all over a sailor might wonder why a ship should strike a reef while on a well-charted run. But Mr. Larkin was safe.

"This is a great thing for me, Captain," he said enthusiastically as the *Cockatoo* sailed. "A new start in a new country, so to speak. I've borrowed, sweated and staked my life on it."

Captain Bean blew his nose in a red handkerchief and was mildly interested.

"Mr. Askew did say something about you starting as a merchant in Honolulu. Think things'll be better there?"

"Well," said Mr. Larkin, "You see, there's a girl . . . and her father doesn't like the idea of her going to Australia . . . and he's already in business in Honolulu, so. . . . " Mr. Larkin waved his hands, "it seems like a good idea that we combine. In fact it's all settled."

"Must be a pretty fine girl," said Captain Bean, regarding his passenger much as one might regard a strange bug. "You tearing up roots and barging north with nothing but a lot of mixed goods and a lot of hope."

"Oh, Mary's all right," said Mr. Larkin assuredly, "and I'm pretty sure the lines I've stocked in will go over big. At least her father thinks so, and it's a big chance for me to make a killing."

"It's a crime," said Captain Bean sadly some time later, as he counted the winnings after the first poker game he had eased Mr. Larkin into. "The boy should be given the facts of life."

"There wasn't much need for the stacked deck," Jed admitted gloomily. He aimed tobacco juice at the sand-box and wiped his mouth. "And what's the figure on doing in Honolulu?"

Captain Bean sighed. "He's in love. The girl's in Honolulu and so he wants to be in Honolulu. That's all there is to it, except he's crazy."

"Is he figgerin' on marryin's the girl?" asked Jed. "Or is it just one of those things?"

"Gentlemen like Mr. Larkin," reproved the captain amiably, "always marry the girl."

So the ancient *Cockatoo* left Sydney Heads behind and breasted the swells of the South Pacific, somewhat uneasily. She was heavily laden, even to her main deck, where in every available fragment of space not essentially needed for working ship were crammed impressive-looking cases and boxes and kegs.

Captain Bean had considerately taken the last of his cargo on board at night, and had left before dawn, not wishing to give any annoyance to officials who might object to the fact that his Plimsol marks were covered.

As a matter of cold fact there were not many men who would have taken the *Cockatoo* to sea at all, even if only lightly laden. She was old and she leaked, and Captain Bean, though a man given to taking startling chances, might have hesitated himself to make the run to San Francisco in such a craft, particularly as his knowledge of sailing vessels was somewhat rusty after years in steam. But the fact was he was somewhat desperate.

The game, as he had remarked, was about played out. He was blacklisted in all decent lines, and even in several that made no pretense at decency. The chances were pretty certain that he would never get another ship of any kind after the *Cockatoo* was wrecked, because even if some ship-owner were willing to take a chance it was a cinch the underwriters wouldn't.

Captain Bean felt he was growing old and he had a yearning to settle down in peace. A little house by the sea, a little garden, a convenient creek for quiet fishing, a few old salts like himself to yarn with—

He might even get married, just like Mr. Jerrold Larkin. Mr. Larkin was crazy, of course, but after the first bottle Captain Bean felt sure that marriage would be the solution for all his troubles. However, the sad fact remained that houses and settling down took cash. Which was why he was in command of the *Cockatoo*, sagging north and east, with a fake cargo in the upper holds and on her deck, and destined to slide peacefully into the sea by a reef near Honolulu.

"We ought to net around forty thousand, Jed," said Captain Bean. "Maybe fifty, with our cut on the ship, and if we're lucky. I got pretty high insurance on our cargo."

"It's a wonder they weren't wise," Jed observed. "Didn't they poke around the stuff?"

"Looked in a few cases," Captain Bean chuckled, "and it was all good. But you see, that feller who's fronting for me as the shipper—my old pal Williams—switched lighters when we loaded and jerked the real stuff back to his factory. He collects for the cargo, takes ten per cent, and cables me the rest. It's a neat little finish, Jed. The boys'll be tickled to hear old Bulkhead Bean went out with a nest-egg at the last."

"You better keep it quiet, then, where you figure on holing up," his brother drawled, "or some of the boys'll be drifting around to collect. There's that little matter of the *Bluebird's* repairs at Thursday Island, f'r instance. And the missing forty tons of copra off the *Water Lily*—"

"I'm surprised, Jed," said the captain reproachfully. "Bringing up matters dead and buried on a trip like this."

"If the crate ever makes it I'll be satisfied," the mate grunted. He spat again and reached for the whiskey.

Captain Bean looked at the list of

figures he had been laboriously compiling, admired the total, patted his ample stomach, and smiled complacently. Yes, it would be a fine last haul, and a clean job, with no chance of a come-back. Everything sewed up tight and legal, in the good old Bulkhead Bean way.

"I think," he observed, "it is time to instruct Mr. Larkin in poker again. He has a few dollars left."

"You might leave him grub money," said Jed sourly. "When this crate's piled up he won't even have a shirt."

"The young and foolish must learn," said Captain Bean. "Go find him. I feel lucky."

AND the incredible Bean luck remained with him all up through the South Pacific. They had fair following winds, met no calms, ran into only two fairly heavy swells until, some two hundred miles from Honolulu, and just when the voyage was drawing to its close upon the convenient reef, the sea dealt a last hand.

It was at night, or rather just before dawn. The moon had gone down. The stars were beginning to pale, and the sea was running long and uneasy, slate-colored and with faint curlings of foam breaking here and there. The *Cockatoo*, pitching badly, heeled to starboard a bit; after several looks at the glass Jed swore and went below to sit on the edge of Captain Bean's bunk and shake him awake.

"Looks like we've got a real blow on our hands," he said. Captain Bean groped mechanically for the whiskey bottle in the rack by his head, took a long, languid swallow, opened his eyes and said, "What's that? A blow? What of it? Reef her down or heave to."

"That's what I was thinking," Jed observed sourly. "We can't pile her up in bad weather, not with an open boat voyage to make."

"That's right," agreed the captain. He slid to the deck, groping for his slippers.

Mr. Jerrold Larkin appeared in the doorway, muffled in a dressing gown, his red hair tousled and his blue eyes somewhat startled.

"Anything wrong?" he demanded. "I heard you talking."

Captain Bean looked at Jed and pursed his lips. It wouldn't do for Mr. Larkin to hear too much.

"Just a little rough weather ahead," he said heartily. "Let's go see." He padded up on the poop, with his brother and the curious Mr. Larkin behind him, and they all stared solemnly at the sky.

"Aye, we'll get it," Captain Bean grunted at last, "but we can hold her as she is for a few hours anyway." He drew Jed aside. "We'll lay by then," he muttered. "South of the reef until the blow's gone. It's a lousy break. I was figgerin' on being in Honolulu the day after tomorrow."

"Well," Jed grumbled, "we won't be. And if it's a bad blow we'll have some stiff pumping to do, the way the crate leaks."

"But what's that over there?" said Mr. Larkin, curious. He huddled in his bathrobe and jerked his head instead of pointing.

The mate turned to spit mechanically and see what was the matter, and then he choked. His whispered, "My God!" brought Captain Bean around too, and his eyes popped. Far down there on the eastern horizon a rocket was breaking into stars, cascading gracefully back towards the sea. They watched, motionless, and another rocket went up.

"Rockets," said Mr. Larkin amazed. "Who on earth would be shooting rockets out here?"

Captain Bean looked at his brother, wiped sudden sweat from his forehead, and remembered with some relief that Mr. Larkin was not a sailor.

"I didn't see anything, Jed," he croaked, "did you?"

"Not if you didn't," drawled his brother.

"But good heavens," said Mr. Larkin, bewildered. "I saw them myself. And look, there's another!"

Captain Bean swore under his breath. All of his crew had been with him for some time and could be relied upon. But with this damned Larkin aboard, who'd probably talk his head off in Honolulu—Yet the *Cockatoo* couldn't stand by any other ship now. Anything might happen. And they had that appointment with the reef as soon as the blow came and passed.

"But what do they mean?" insisted Mr. Larkin. "Rockets at sea? There must be something the matter."

Jed stuck his hands in his hip pockets, spat over the rail and drawled absently, "Trouble. Some ship in trouble."

"Oh, shut up, Jed," snapped Captain Bean. He found he was shaking and went below for a bottle. When he came back, feeling better, with the bottle stuck in his pocket, he discovered all the crew gathered at the main deck rail, silently watching the rockets lift and flame and burst against the young dawn. No one said anything. The men turned and looked at him for a moment and then turned away, shrugging. Bulkhead Bean usually knew what he was about.

"I don't understand," burst out Mr. Larkin. "Shouldn't we go and see what's the matter?"

Jed spat over the rail again.

"Might be in bad trouble," he observed absently. "Might be some fellers needing a hand."

"You're crazy," said Captain Bean. "You know damn well we can't take a chance."

"Take a chance?" demanded the bewildered Mr. Larkin. "What do you mean, take a chance? If someone's in trouble it's up to us, isn't it?"

Captain Bean took another drink and groaned. Mr. Larkin had suddenly become a very important nuisance.

"No, we can't take a chance," Jed agreed, absently again. "But I'll take a look." He tucked some glasses in his pocket, climbed leisurely in the mizzen rigging, and focussed them. He was aloft for some time, and Captain Bean scowled and retired behind the main cabin skylight to take another drink. This was the worst break he had ever had. Jed dropped down on the poop again, spat and said dreamily, "She's a big packet. Liner, by the looks."

"Which lets us out," said Captain Bean with sudden relief. "We can't do nothing for a liner. Anyway, she's got a wireless and there'll be half the Navy out from Pearl Harbor by now."

"Seems like she's afire," said Jed mildly. And Mr. Larkin added, "If it's that bad we must certainly try and do something." He was quite upset.

Captain Bean shook his head, scowling. The *Cockatoo* was beginning to take sprays over for'ard and the wind was increasing. Jed looked aloft and then yelled for the watch to get up there and take in the royal and tops'ls. Aside, he observed, "Might be women and kids on board."

Captain Bean swore, his red face showing splotches of white.

"What the hell's wrong with you? You know we can't do a thing for her." He dragged him aside again. "Look, Jed, if anyone snoops around us we're sunk. Suppose some Navy boat comes pokin' along and wants to look at our papers or something—and takes a squint at the deck cargo. D'you want to go to jail? Here, take a drink and try and quiet Larkin down. Tell him anything."

Jed took a drink and shrugged. Captain Bean mopped his perspiring face and fumed. Why did this have to happen to him, this time of all times? He swore again, took another drink, and then weakened. He was after all a sail-

or. And he knew that if he passed on, those rockets would burn in his conscience until he died.

"I suppose we'd better go over and see," he grumbled finally. "Can't do any harm. I'll bet a dollar there's half a dozen boats swarming around her anyway." But he knew, as Jed knew, that distressed vessels do not send up rockets if there are boats swarming around them, and if the danger is not very great.

THE *Cockatoo* hove to three hours later, a few cables' lengths from a ship that made Captain Bean's eyes bulge out. She was a liner, no less, white-sided, twin-funnelled, her decks black with people. She had an ugly list to starboard and her midships was a fog of black smoke with flickerings of flame. The rising sea was lurching her badly, and aft they were lowering a boat. Jed looked through his glasses and whistled.

"It's the *Prince Edward,*" he said. "She's the crack of the Prince Line, and if she don't lay down on her side pretty soon I'll miss a guess."

Mr. Larkin was shocked, his face quite white.

"All those people," he whispered, "and the ship on fire." He gripped Captain Bean's arm and shook him in his excitement. "It's lucky we saw those rockets. It's lucky we came along," he choked.

Captain Bean eyed him sourly.

"What you don't know," he observed, "is plenty." And to Jed, resigned, "Throw that boat a line. We might as well see what it's all about."

The *Prince Edward's* boat slid alongside the barkentine and an officer with many gold bands on his epaulettes climbed to the poop. His white uniform was charred in places, grimy with soot and oil. His face was haggard and he was visibly shaking.

"Captain Harrold's compliments, sir." he said. "We're in a bad way. Can you take off our passengers, and possibly the crew?"

"Take off—?" Captain Bean swallowed hard so his chins shook. "What's the matter with your wireless?"

"We had an explosion in the engine-room six or seven hours back, sir. No one knows what caused it. Blew the midships right out of her and the radio room with it. Killed forty men. She's still afire, as you can see, and the engineroom and after holds are flooded. We can't hold her with the handpumps and the auxiliary gasoline pumps, that's obvious. She's making water fast."

"You've still enough boats, haven't you?"

The other man smiled thinly.

"Not quite, sir. We lost a full half in the explosion. Anyway, with the weather we're going to have, I doubt if the boats could live. We've been sending up rockets for hours and you're the first to answer. Queer, isn't it? Right in the shipping lane too, and we have to raise a windjammer."

Captain Bean took hold of himself.

"I can't possibly take off your passengers," he protested. "Look at the size of my ship. I haven't enough water or provisions for that matter—How many on board?" he demanded suddenly.

"Five hundred and sixty, including the crew," said the officer in a strained voice. "That is, five hundred and sixty left. We were on a luxury cruise and the passenger list was small."

Captain Bean staggered a little, moved to the rail and sat on it. He pulled the bottle from his pocket and took a long drink, while the officer watched with disapproving eyes. Of all the luck, was right! To raise what must be the last of the windjammers, manned by a fat, drunken fool! Captain Bean choked, coughed, and banged the cork back in the bottle. His usually florid face was gray.

"I can't take them, mister. I'm sorry, but there it is. Where would I put them?"

The officer shook his head.

"It'd be tough, sir, I know. But you might jettison, throw cargo overboard to make room."

"Of course," broke in Mr. Larkin tensely. "There's nothing we can do."

Captain Bean licked his lips. If he jettisoned cargo he could make room, but what was going to happen to the barratry job, sinking the *Cockatoo?*

"I'm under no legal obligation to take you off," he managed through tight lips. The officer looked at him with a trace of contempt.

"That's correct, sir. Is that your last word?"

"It's got to be," muttered Captain Bean.

"Then I suppose we must trust to our boats," said the officer bitterly, and went away. Captain Bean saw him swing aboard the liner again, and he looked haggardly at Jed.

"My stars, Jed! Five hundred and sixty! On a crate like this!"

Jed stuck his thumbs in his belt, spat and nodded morosely.

"They couldn't blame us much, that's a fact. But we're the only ship here."

"Good God!" shouted Mr. Larkin excitedly. "What are you talking about? There are women and children in danger and you stand there and argue."

Captain Bean glared at him. "What the hell do you know about it? Why should I throw valuable cargo overboard? Anyway, we can't take them."

"But we've got to," Mr. Larkin insisted. "Good God, man, we can't stand by and see people die just for some damned cargo!"

THE liner's boat was coming back, and then occurred something almost unparalleled in the annals of the sea. For the master of the *Prince Edward* himself swung to the barkentine's deck and came aft, and a master seldom leaves his ship under any circumstances on the high seas, and certainly never when she is in distress.

"Captain Bean?" he inquired gently. He was a slender man, white-haired, leathery-faced, lined and tired, but with eyes that were a clear, hard blue. "Captain Bean, I have come personally to request your aid. My ship cannot last more than another hour or so. My wireless is wrecked, so is my engine room. I have women and children on board. I have not enough boats left. And if the gale breaks it's likely all hands will be lost. I don't care for myself, and my officers feel as I do. You realize that. But the passengers—." He stopped and waited. Captain Bean took the bottle from his pocket again. He was shaken.

"I don't know as your people would be any safer on board here," he said flatly. "If it's a bad gale—"

He drank mightily and handed the bottle to the other man. The captain of the *Prince Edward* reddened, a little outraged, started to refuse, then took a long look at Captain Bean and, incredibly, tilted the bottle and drank. The men's eyes met.

"Jed," said Captain Bean slowly. "Start to jettison the cargo. All the deck and shelter deck. In fact *all*—" he looked at Jed meaningly—"that ought to go."

He pulled Jed close to him for a moment so the others would not hear. "The barratry's shot, Jed. But if we get my fake junk out of her we might make something out of this yet. Askew and Larkin will have to share my loss."

"Aye, aye," agreed Jed. "I get it."

"Better give me an hour to make some space," Captain Bean told the other master. "And then shoot the works. They're shot anyway, at that. And I'm just about ruined."

"What do you think I am?" said the

other man with a tight little smile. "Look at my ship."

" I don't see what else we could do," said Mr. Larkin, "except take them off." He was calmer now. And he added apologetically, "I'm sorry I butted in, Captain, but I simply couldn't understand your hesitation."

"That's all right," said Captain Bean with grim humor. "It's going to cost you money as well as me."

The liner's master went away, and the cargo of the *Cockatoo* went into the sea. Captain Bean roared for the steward and told him to fix up the main cabin and smaller cabins as best he could for some of the women and children.

"Jed and I won't be sleeping anyway," he explained. "And you tell the crew we'll be using the foc'sle for more women and such."

"Yes, sir," agreed the steward, and checked as Captain Bean called him back. "Bring me up a case of whiskey before the folks get packed below and block the lazarette," he growled. "I figure I'll be needing a lot of drinks."

He watched moodily, a hunched, fat figure, as an hour or so later the boatloads of passengers began to board the barkentine, most of the women and children panic-stricken and crying. Some were seasick even from the short crossing, for the sea was heaving high. Two men and a woman were drowned as it was, falling into the water as they tried to climb the wet pilot ladders and swept away before hands or boathooks could reach them.

It was an ugly business. More cargo continued to go over one side of the *Cockatoo* as the passengers came up over the other, and stewards from the liner sorted the men from the women, directed them into the main cabin or the foc'sle or to cleared sections of the shelter deck. The *Prince Edward* was listing at a forty-five degrees angle long before all hands had been transferred, but everyone was already in the boats or on life rafts, standing off and on, riding the turbulent sea and waiting while the barkentine made more space below.

The *Prince Edward* slowly turned turtle and slid under, so the great wave caused made the boats and rafts reel and dance like corks, and brought tight screams and panic-stricken cries from the throats of those still afloat. It took four hours before the liner's captain came over to the rail, the last man, and he stumbled on the poop to join Captain Bean.

The barkentine's main deck was a seething mass of people hammered by ugly sprays, but the stewards were getting them under cover as fast as possible, and distributing the blankets and pillows brought over, while pyramids of provisions and many water kegs from the boats went below with them.

"They'll be packed like blacks in an old slaver," said Captain Bean with alcoholic humor, opening the third bottle. He drank. "But it can't be helped. I've got to have the decks clear for working ship. We'll have to clap hatches on them soon; she's shipping a lot of water already. Maybe you'd better go talk to them and tell them it's just too bad and it's no use panicking. We might knock a small hole in the deck here and there to give them air, and if a little sea wets them that can't be helped either."

"No," agreed the other master wearily, "it can't be helped. I think I'll take a drink myself. I need it. You too, Mr. Larkin?"

Mr. Larkin took the bottle and laughed shakily.

"It's been quite an experience," he said, "rescuing all those people." He swallowed a long drink and handed the bottle back to Captain Bean. "You know, I thought it was funny a while ago. I was giving the men a hand with the cargo and one of those cases of

machinery broke—" Captain Bean held his breath—"and so far as I could make out there was only scrap iron inside."

Captain Bean swallowed twice to make sure his throat would work, and then said heartily, "Just your imagination, I guess."

"Probably," Mr. Larkin agreed. "The mate threw everything away in such a hurry I didn't pay too much attention. Guess I'll go help some more. They still seem to be needing room, the way they're pitching stuff over."

"That," Captain Bean muttered under his breath, "is what you think. Scrap iron and stones. I can't take that into Honolulu. Not if I'm going to make any claim stick."

Two hours later the full gale broke, and the *Cockatoo* lay hove to, swept like a half-tide rock. And how she survived at all remained a miracle to Captain Bean. They crawled into Honolulu three days afterwards in tow of a frowsy tramp steamer that had sighted them and taken off most of the passengers, and the wreck of the *Prince Edward* entered into history.

JED and Captain Bean sat in the lawyer's office and the lawyer leaned back in his swivel chair and listened.

"As I understand it," he said at last, "you want me to file a claim for general average contribution on your behalf, or rather on behalf of the shipper you represent."

"Correct," said Captain Bean. Jed leaned forward a little and hit the spittoon with a stream of tobacco juice.

"Might I ask," he said absently, "just what all that means?" Captain Bean stroked his chins and smiled.

"General average means, Jed, that when in a jam you have to jettison cargo the shippers whose cargo *ain't* jettisoned, or their underwriters, and the owner of the ship, or his underwriters, are liable to share the loss. Seeing which I, as agent for the Sydney shipper of cased machinery and such, which he threw in the ditch, am claiming his loss be shared. Which in turn means we ought to save something out of the wreck."

"It looks like you've a clear case, Captain," said the lawyer briskly. "But I'll have to look up the law to make certain. You drop by tomorrow at four and I'll let you know."

Captain Bean steered Jed into a bar and magnanimously bought the drinks.

"If we get what I think we'll make a profit yet," he announced. "That junk we tossed overside didn't cost me five hundred dollars and it's worth thirty thousand odd—officially. Old Askew as owner and Mr. Jerrold Larkin as the other shipper will have apoplexy, but I can't help that. The law's the law, and we ought to get five thousand or so out of them. Of course, it ain't going to be as good as if we'd collected full insurance on the stuff and got our whack for the *Cockatoo* as well, but it'll give us another start. And if them passengers make up a fat purse, as I did hear rumors of, why, I'll get the little house yet."

"I'll be damned," said Jed and looked for a place to put his chew. "But it's going to be tough on Larkin. He'll have to sell half his cargo to pay us."

"Well, he's lucky to save any of it," said Captain Bean reasonably. "If things had gone right with us it'd all be down now among the fishes. And anyway he's crazy."

"Still, it's tough," said Jed, "with the kid figgerin' on gettin' married and all, and him still in debt for his goods."

"It's the way of the world," sighed Captain Bean, blowing his nose in his red handkerchief. Someone tapped him on the shoulder and he looked round with a grunt of surprise as a stocky individual with a broken nose and a cauliflower ear vigorously pumped his hand.

"Well, Jenkins!" said Captain Bean heartily. "I haven't seen you since we ran that load of Chinks into California. What's doing now?"

"Plenty," said Jenkins in a voice made husky by strong whiskey. "I saw in the papers about what you done with the *Prince Edward* and thought I'd look you up. If you've nothing much in view I've a sweet little job in opium . . . Mexican coast. All set and safe, but I need a skipper."

"Jenkins," said Captain Bean sadly, "I'm a reformed man. No more funny stuff for me. I'm collecting some nice dough from a general average claim and then I'm settling down."

"Well," said Jenkins huskily, "You're a damned liar, or you ain't Bulkhead Bean any more. But if you change your mind let me know. How about a drink?"

THERE were two other men in the lawyer's office when Captain Bean and Jed arrived the next day. One was a tall, lean man with horn-rimmed spectacles and very thin lips. The other was Mr. Jerrold Larkin. His red hair was on end and he looked indignant. The lawyer introduced the first man.

"This is Mr. Stone, Captain Bean. He has been retained by cable to represent Mr. Askew, the owner of the *Cockatoo*. Mr. Larkin, of course, you know as the shipper of the cargo you brought in. He's representing himself. I asked these gentlemen up here, since there seem to be curious angles to the case."

"Well," said Captain Bean heartily, "let's get down to business. What's the settlement?"

"I didn't know things would become this involved," said Mr. Larkin briskly. Captain Bean rubbed his chins and looked sad.

"You should have thought of that when you were so insistent about us jettisoning cargo. Well, what's the good news?"

The lawyer pursed his lips ruefully. "Not quite so fast, Captain. I said there were curious angles. Mr. Larkin, for one, has some questions to ask."

"I have," agreed Mr. Larkin hotly. "As soon as I heard of the claim you intended to file and realized what it would mean to me I consulted with Mr. Stone and we did some considerable research."

Captain Bean nodded amiably.

"Go ahead," he said. "I know when a claim's good."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Larkin, "I understand you're very well informed on marine law. In fact some of my inquiries about you seem to imply you are extremely well informed."

"I've got by," said Captain Bean modestly and dug Jed in the ribs with a chuckle. Mr. Stone coughed behind his hand and interjected. "Well, then, you know that a general average contribution is invariably allowed when some amount of cargo is jettisoned because the vessel or its crew are in serious danger. Correct?"

Captain Bean looked at his lawyer and his lawyer nodded.

"Correct," said Captain Bean. Mr. Larkin ruffled his red hair and broke in excitedly, "but what did you jettison your cargo for, Captain?" Captain Bean stared and had a sinking feeling something was coming.

"Why, to make room for the passengers and crew of the *Prince Edward*."

"But your ship was in no danger when you sighted her."

"She wasn't doing any too well," said the captain cautiously. He looked at his lawyer and noted that young man had lowered his eyes and was whistling soundlessly to himself. It looked bad. Mr. Stone snapped, "Speak up, Captain. She was in no danger."

"She wasn't sinking, if that's what you mean. But what's this got to do—"

"I'll tell you," exploded Mr. Larkin excitedly. "If you didn't jettison to save either ship or crew you've no claim for general average. You've always talked about the law; well, that's it. We've looked everything up."

Jed leaned forward, spat in the cuspidor, and said solemnly, "I smell a lot of rats." His brother frowned and thought.

"I don't see what you're driving at," he grumbled. "It's all plain and above board. I couldn't take five hundred and sixty people on the *Cockatoo* without jettisoning." Mr. Larkin waved his hand.

"That isn't the point. Did you jettison before or after the people came on board?"

"You ought to know. Both. We jettisoned for an hour or more to make room for a few boatloads and then dumped the stuff right along so the others could come aboard."

"But the ship was never in any danger. I know! I was on board, wasn't I?"

"What's that got to do with it?" Captain Bean roared. "She would have been in danger if I'd piled all them people on top of my deck cargo, and so would they. They'd have been dead by now. You did enough howling about it!"

"Please allow me," Mr. Stone broke in impatiently. "Mr. Larkin's main point is this: you jettisoned cargo when your ship was in no danger."

"Well, in a way," Captain Bean admitted grudgingly. "But how could I take the folks aboard if I didn't jettison?"

"But, Captain, you're getting off the subject. Your ship was in no danger, yet you threw cargo overboard. And you continued to do so still while your ship was not in danger."

"That's true," insisted Mr. Larkin. "I'm a witness to it myself and I can get scores of others to witness the same. It was a fine thing to rescue those people and I'm sorry about everything. But I'm fighting to save myself. It's a legal fact, as Mr. Stone will bear me out that you can't claim general average under the conditions. Besides," he looked at Captain Bean, somewhat puzzled, "I don't see why you take it so much to heart. It wasn't your cargo. And I still think there was something funny about it. I told you about that case that broke and all that scrap iron that fell out."

"It wasn't my—" Captain Bean began to explode, and then choked the words back. No, officially it was not his cargo.

"You mean," he said at last in a small voice, "that because I threw cargo overside to save a lot of peril there's no valid claim? You mean it wasn't a matter of legitimate peril of the sea?" He looked at his lawyer and his lawyer shrugged.

"I sympathize with you, Captain. You did your duty. But business is business and the law's the law. You have no claim, and I fancy the underwriters for the lost cargo will reach that conclusion also. If I were you I'd inform your Sydney shippers to that effect."

CAPTAIN BEAN managed finally, somewhat dazed, "It don't make sense. If I hadn't of jettisoned I couldn't of saved those folks." The props had been knocked completely from under him. The young lawyer looked up suddenly. "Tell me, Captain. If you hadn't jettisoned a thing, would the addition of several people, a dozen or so, have endangered the ship? She was heavily laden, I understand."

"A dozen might not have, save they'd have got in the way."

"Would a hundred, then?" Captain Bean rubbed his chins and considered.

"A hundred, maybe. If they hadn't

been washed over the side when the big blow came."

"Well, to make it better, we'll say that two hundred people coming on board at one time would have put the *Cockatoo* in definite peril of the sea."

"There ain't no question of that," croaked Captain Bean heatedly. "But I still don't understand what it's got to do with my—my shipper's claim not being good. The loss should be shared."

Mr. Larkin stood up and reached for his hat.

"His claim would have been good," he said briskly, "but you made one mistake. If you had waited until a sufficient number of people had come aboard to definitely put you in danger, so that the addition of others would have increased that danger, and then started to jettison, you'd have been all right. As the law reads you should have waited until you had the limit of safety reached and then, as each additional person came on board, and not before, jettisoned an amount of cargo sufficient to restore the ship to seaworthiness again. To make it clearer, as each new person boarded you should have jettisoned another case."

Captain Bean sank ponderously back in his chair, fascinated, his eyes slightly glazed as they surveyed Mr. Larkin.

"And you dug that one up yourself," he marveled. "Hardly dry behind the ears yet. And I said you were crazy."

"It must have been those poker sessions that gave you that impression," said Mr. Larkin briskly. "I lost quite a lot before things occurred to me." Then he laughed, slapped Captain Bean on the shoulder, said, "No hard feelings, I hope," and left the office with Mr. Stone.

"It ain't brains makes a man smart," muttered Captain Bean. "It's love. No damned lawyer would have dug up a lot of hair-splitting like that with five hundred and sixty people saved, enough to make any court hand down a decent verdict. But there you are. He wanted the girl, so everything goes wrong."

The young lawyer coughed.

"We might make a fight of it, Captain," he suggested. "As you remark, a court might get soft over saving the *Prince Edward's* people."

Captain Bean shook his head and rose ponderously to his feet.

"No," he said, "Never mind. I know when I'm licked."

Jed spat in the cuspidor and hitched up his belt.

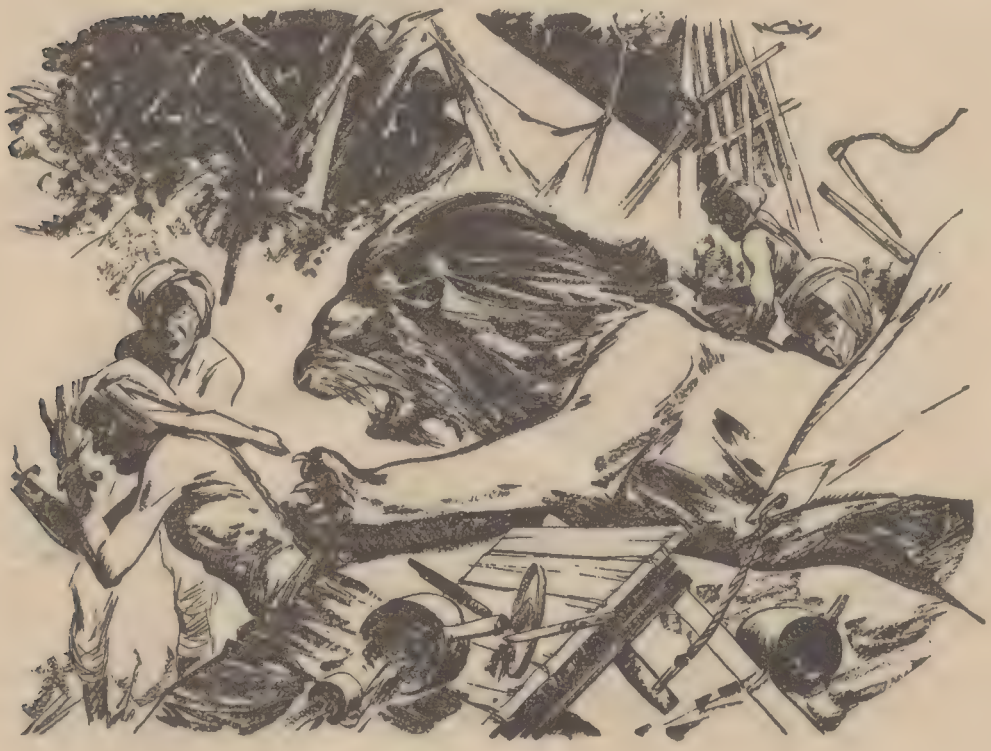
"Well," he said, resigned, "What do we do now? Apply to the Seamen's Mission for a handout?"

Captain Bean blew his nose in his red handkerchief.

"No," he said amiably. "We'll go find Jenkins. He's got a little opium job and I guess he still needs a skipper. I'll maybe make enough to settle down yet."

And he left the office, muttering to himself, quite awed, "Just imagine, a little thing like that. We should have jettisoned case by case."

THE LIONS THAT STOPPED A RAILROAD



"Victim for the night!"

A fact Story

By GORDON MacCREAGH

THEY furnish a record almost incredible. They terrorized five thousand men for nearly a year. They killed and ate nearly a hundred of them. They completely stopped the building of a British government railroad for nearly a month. A record of ferocity unequaled, of courage equally difficult to believe, and of stupidity born of officialdom on the part of the men concerned.

All of it would be entirely fantastic, except for the fact that the participants in the grisly drama are men of the highest integrity and they vouch for every word of the record set down by one of their own number, the chief actor in it.

The railroad is the British East African line from Mombasa to Uganda. The lions are—were—the most famous of their tribe in history, the two man-eaters of Tsavo. The men were officers of the British Army in charge of construction.

Perhaps that last explains the whole of it. The "muddling through" of it, the astounding "officialness" of it all, the sheer dumbness of it, and the blank courage that never knew how dumb or how brave it was.

Most of that last statement will be

well jumped on. All right. I shall quote verbatim from the record.

The year was 1898. The British government railroad had reached the west bank of the Tsavo River, so the foreign office sent out a young man with the military rank of colonel to carry on the good work. That's the way those people do things. Or maybe he was not a colonel when he went out, but they made him a colonel for it.

And maybe he was a good engineer too; the record modestly does not say. It does say, emphatically between the lines, that he was no hunter—nor, since the thing was official, was any practical hunter at any time called in. It was up to official dumbness and British nerve to bull through. And, as usual, it somehow did.

At Tsavo, scattered about various construction camps, were some five thousand coolies imported from British India, since the local Wa-Kamba, Wa-Nyika, Swahili and what-all tribesmen would not stoop to labor. White men in charge were our colonel, the record writer, a doctor with the rank of major, and another captain.

The country was the typical African plain of the "water hole" type of motion picture—sun-stricken, covered with tall grass land, interspersed with patches of jungle and sparse flat-topped trees and tumbled piles of rocks, and the river for drinking.

Good game country, therefore good lion country.

Nobody knows why the lions soured on game and took to man. Usually only decrepit old beasts, getting slow on the jump, take to man eating. These two were young, strong, in full health. Two big males hunting together. Just a pair of bad youngsters with the devil in them and all the devil's cunning.

So here is what happened.

Coolies began to disappear. The other coolies meekly reported to the white *sahib*, heaven-born and protector of the poor, that they had been eaten by lions. Lofty official disbelief, accepting always the worst of the wily Hindu, credited the disappearances to desertion or foul play. The record says: "I thought it quite likely that some scoundrels had murdered them for their money."

Till proof was shoved down the official throat. A *jemadar* (corporal) overseer was taken. The details are not pretty. The *jemadar* shared a tent—an open flap tent, mind you—with a squad of workmen. At midnight a lion suddenly stepped in, grabbed the *jemadar*, lifted him like a mouse and walked out. The man was big and strong; he put up a fight.

The other men in that tent and in the score or so of surrounding tents covered their heads with their blankets so as not to hear the shrieking and roaring of the fight that seems to have lasted half an hour before the lion won. In the morning the gang meekly reported to the heaven-born once more.

This time there were so many witnesses and so many marks of a bloody struggle that the colonel took his captain and followed up the tracks, plainly marked by pools and gobbets of blood, to where, only a short distance away, as the record unimaginatively says, "a dreadful spectacle presented itself."

The spectacle was the *jemadar's* head, intact, with wide eyes staring at a few remaining bones and uneatable portions of himself. The men buried the rest of him and then took the head back for "official identification before the medical officer."

UP TO this point we can say that this and preceding occurrences were unusual, sudden beyond all expectation. But from here on things happen that are difficult to believe. Listen.

The next night, after the grisly affair of the head, the colonel boss of the works sat up in a tree with a rifle close

to the late *jemadar's* tent, "hoping that the lions would return to it for another victim."—I'm quoting this direct from the record so blandly vouched for by the official gentlemen who were actual participants in these doings. The officer in charge of five thousand coolies "hoped" that the lions would return for another victim. He was followed to his perch by "a few of the more terrified coolies, who begged to be allowed to sit up in the tree with me; all the *other workmen remained in their tents.*"

Difficult enough to believe—but the lion's cunning more so. The colonel sat up in a tree at base camp. The lions, led surely by the devil, raided a tent in a camp half a mile away.

The lions worked a diabolical technique. One of them roared and prowled around outside to paralyze everyone with fear, and the other one boldly walked into a tent, grabbed a man and carried him out. To the official in charge, this was exhausting work, sitting up in trees listening to lions carrying off coolies, numbing to the limbs as well as to the head. So the astounding record goes on to relate: "After a night's rest, therefore, I took up my position in a suitable tree near *this* tent."

The five thousand coolies, now minus a few, continued to sleep in their unprotected tents. It is not surprising, then, that "about midnight I heard screams and cries and a heart-rending shriek, which told me that the man-eaters had again eluded me and had claimed another victim elsewhere."

The third in four nights. You would think that the *garib-parwar*, the protector of the poor, would be thinking up some sort of precautions to protect five thousand coolies.

What that staunch one-track mind did was to persist in its hope of outwitting the lions by lying in wait around various tents, and disappointedly records: "They appeared to have an extraordinary and uncanny faculty of finding out our plans beforehand, so that . . . they invariably avoided that particular place and seized their victim for the night from some other camp."

"Victim for the night!" The grimness of the happening is almost lost in the casualness of the writing. But there the stark fact stands. Lions walked into camp and ate a man every two or three nights a week!

Quite a toll of human lives was mounting up. So to our colonel came a fine sporting thought. He set out to track down the lions to their lair by day. He writes: "I continued to devote all my spare time to crawling about through undergrowth."

His "spare time", mark you. For the good work of building an official railroad, like the mails, must go through. And, in all his inexperience, he crawled around in the jungle looking for man-eating lions in their lair! Give him credit for courage.

At no time during all the slaughter did it ever occur to anybody concerned—not to the executive officers of the line, nor to the foreign office in London—that conditions might perhaps be made safe before the job went ahead.

So nearly five thousand men continued to sleep in tents.

Other people, other methods. Imagine a thing like that going on for nearly a year when Colonel Goethals was building the Panama Canal, when every mosquito bite raised a howl.

THE coolies, meek still through their daily toil and nightly dread, of course endowed the lions with evil spirits and possession by the devil. And, in view of their savagery and cunning, anybody might agree. Except that the devil doesn't make mistakes, and the lions did. The record cites them as "one or two amusing incidents."

One of these was that a trader in tin hardware was riding in to camp on a donkey one night—the whole populace seems to have been weak-minded. A lion sprang out and rolled man and beast kicking. But it managed to get itself tangled with a string of tin cans that made such a clatter that the lion bolted, trailing cans like a hound dog on a Fourth of July.

Amusing for everybody but the trader.

Another good incident. A lion picked on a Greek contractor named Themistocles Pappadimitrini and jumped into his open tent. In a hurry the lion grabbed the first good man-smelly thing it found and rushed away with it. The fun was that it was only Themistocles' mattress.

I once shared a similar mattress with a Syrian peddler of German enamelware in the Amazon River head waters. I can understand that lion's mistake.

Still another joke was that a lion charged into a tent full of fifteen coolies and nearly tore one man's shoulder off, but carried away only a fat bag of rice. The record says that these "amusing incidents occurred to relieve the tension from which our nerves were beginning to suffer."

And everybody went right on sleeping in open tents! Indian coolies, we may assume, are born dumb and have learned nothing since.

But the white officers, steadfast in their tradition, were not asking their men to do anything that they would not do themselves. Even they slept in tents.

Till one night our colonel and the medical major were awakened about midnight—always the lion's zero hour—by "something tumbling about among the tent ropes." Unbelievably they lit a lantern and went to look see—the kind of people who rush in where angels fear to tread. But the luck of their kind held good. They saw nothing. Daylight, however, revealed the tracks of a huge lion. So, the record feebly says: "On that occasion I fancy one or other of us had a narrow escape."

So then came a brain wave. Why not surround every camp with a *boma*—a thorn fence? Every hunter, every traveler, every missionary in African lion country had camped within *bomas* ever since the coming of the white man. So the idea just had to strike through sooner or later.

"Nevertheless," our colonel reports, "the lions managed to jump over or to break through some one or other of these, and regularly *every few nights a man was carried off.*"

Quite naively the record goes on that the coolies were beginning to become restive under this regime. Work had to be delayed while all hands knocked off "until they had built exceptionally thick and high *bomas* around each camp."

If the newer ones, under army engineering guidance, were exceptional, what must the first amateur attempts have been? For one of the lions found a way through the *boma* of no less a place than the hospital camp.

The assistant medico, hearing a noise, went to the door of his tent and "was horrified to see a great lion looking at him." The lion rushed at him. His frenzied leap backward upset a crate of medical supplies with such a crash of breaking glass and a stench of chemicals that the lion very coolly passed up that victim and walked around within the enclosure, looking for a better chance. Now read this slowly. The lion found a ward tent with eight sick men in it. His spring badly wounded two of them and he seized and carried off a third. This one he dragged clear through the *boma*, leaving strips of gory flesh and ragged skin clinging to the thorns.

Not that it is impossible to build a lion-proof *boma*. I myself have built a hundred of them. And how did I get

to be so smart, not being an engineer or anything? By the simple rule of asking an old-timer how to do it. This one was an experienced old ivory poacher. I could do that because I was no official of any sort and so I could take advice from people outside the caste.

So what did our officials do? They quickly built another *boma* for the hospital, presumably putting their experience of the weaknesses of this one into the job. They moved all the patients into it before dark. They left tents standing in the old hospital *boma,* hoping thus cleverly to outwit the lions, and they lay in wait in one of the tents. Admit to these men always their courage.

And what did the lions do? They were diabolically clever enough to go to the new hospital *boma,* jump *over* it and get them a hospital attendant.

The attendant had been lying with his feet towards his tent wall. One of the lions got his head under the canvas and grabbed the man by the right foot.

The other occupants of the tent heard the man's shriek and saw him clutch desperately at a heavy packing case; saw man and case dragged across the floor, under the canvas, till the case struck and the man's hold was torn loose.

Cowering from the tent flap, they saw the man clutch next at a tent peg while the lion backed relentlessly, growling muffled warning through his jaws full of human leg. Till patients who hobbled from their cots saw the tent peg torn from the ground. The lion then transferred its hold to the man's throat, shook the last shriek from him and, like a cat with a mouse, ran around the enclosure, looking for the weak spot that he knew the engineers must have left. Of course he found it and *dragged the man through,* leaving the usual relics.

The boss colonel and the medical major took up the tracks next morning. Only four hundred yards away they found "the usual horrible sight." Only the skull, the jaws, some bones, and a part of a hand with two fingers left.

I must repeat that I quote verbatim. "On one of these was a silver ring, and this, with the teeth (a relic much prized by certain castes) was sent to the man's widow in India."

AT no time during this year of terror did the engineers succeed in building any effectual *boma.* And it wasn't that they were in a wilderness without supplies. The railroad track was down; machinery was coming in, steel tanks and things were being erected.

Coolies, left to their own devices, fixed up sleeping platforms on top of these very tanks and in trees. But even East Indian coolies have limits to their meekness.

The restiveness, so plaintively noted in the record, was reaching the point of rebellion.

The record proceeds in gruesome repetition. The white men sat up in various trees, over tents, over goats tied out as bait, which the man eaters properly scorned, over half eaten human remains, "which I would not allow to be buried, hoping that the lions would return."

Always hoping. One night two hunters sat up in a box car with the door open—and the lions stalked them. They heard the roars with which the lions always advertised their raid. Then silence. Then stealthy sounds in the surrounding brush, vast snuffling breaths. They distinguished vague moving shadows.

Here were the lions at last actually at hand before armed white men. But the "difficulty of shooting in the dark" restrained their hands. No one of them ever seems to have heard of luminous sights.

One of the lions sprang at the open door of the box car. Both men blazed madly away at whatever they saw as

best as they could. Neither of them hit anything at all. But the rifle fire frightened both beasts away.

"Thus ended," the record lamely relates, "my first actual encounter with the man-eaters."

Then the inexplicable lions gave them a respite for "some considerable time." Our colonel is a little bewildered as to why.

Any hunter could have told him that these lusty young devils were attending to their more important business of mating.

Till "one dark night the familiar terror stricken cries and screams awoke the camps and we knew that the demons had returned."

The program was the old familiar one. A lion forced its way, as usual, through one of the futile *bomas.* "Sticks, stones, and firebrands were hurled in the direction of the intruder."

But the lion charged into the middle of the huddled men, grabbed one and dragged him off through the thick thorn fence. The record persists in calling it thick.

So much for those safe, sit-at-home explorers who declaim that a wild beast will always run from fire. So unconcerned were these man-eaters that the other one of the pair joined his hunting partner outside and the two of them sat down and ate their man "within thirty yards of the *boma.*"

The *jemadar* of that camp "fired several shots in their direction." And that was the feeble all that anybody did. Two lions sat eating a man within thirty yards of a camp of several hundred other men—and a camp boss was the only man who had a gun! Why, since the engineers didn't know how to build lion-proof shelters for their workmen, was not every camp organized with a corps of riflemen? Why was not every coolie armed for self defense?

It can be done. I have seen ten African natives, armed only with spears, surround a lion and kill it. But the best defense granted here for a camp of several hundred men was one corporal with a gun.

Followed a fatuous episode where the lions, both together, burst into the biggest headquarters camp, snatched their man from right next to the inspector's hut, and sat down to feast close beside the camp. The chief, from his *boma,* could hear the shrieking of the coolies and the inspector's frenzied shooting.

But the beasts by this time thought so little of official marksmanship that they calmly lay there until their meal was finished, "although the inspector fired over fifty shots."

Shooting as wild as the lion's calmness.

But now another brain wave came to our officer in charge of the works. He constructed an ingenious lion trap in which "a couple of coolies might be used as bait." The record adds, "without being subjected to any danger."

There turned out, however, to be a limit to the meekness of even coolies. Most unpatriotically, no couple of them were willing to act as lion bait.

So what did our amazing executive do? Damned if he didn't go in and be bait himself! But all he got was "badly bitten by mosquitos." So he gave that up.

The record continues in all its futility—hunters sitting up in trees, taking hair raising chances, crawling after tracks in dense underbrush.

On one appalling occasion the lions caught their man at the railroad station and brought him all the way over to the chief's camp to eat him. "I could plainly hear them crunching the bones, and the sound of their dreadful purring rang in my ears for days."

Why wouldn't it? Sitting half the night, listening to lions eat up a man whom it was your duty to protect! Well, anyhow, even if the official nine-

tenths of him could do nothing about it, at any rate the human fraction of him felt genuinely sorry for the poor fellows.

I have talked with men—hunters, traders, what not—who were in Africa at the time. Not at Tsavo, only officials were at Tsavo. At least fifty of those hundred could have gone out with a rifle and shot those lions. I am not finding fault with our bewildered colonel, in all his inexperience, for not so doing.

I am finding fault with a cast iron state of official mind. These hunters, traders, and so on were men of the same tradition of courage, of the same breed—no, not breed; officials are a breed apart. Any single good white hunter with a couple of Wanderobo trackers could have gone out and tracked those lions down within a week. And even if any carping critic would want to argue with that, consider the other more obvious defense. There were half a dozen camps in all. The lions came once or twice every week and got a man from one or other of these camps. What could be more simple than to station a white hunter in each of these camps to sit and wait for the next lion?

But official things have to be done officially. No one of these experienced lion hunters was an official.

However, this brought about the climax.

Some half a dozen workmen in a nearby shack "became so terrified on hearing the lions at their meal" that they risked the outdoors and came clamoring to be let into the white man's *boma*. Which he did willingly; but on counting them he found that they had callously left one of their number, too sick to walk, behind. Whereupon our colonel went right out to bring that man in. But the poor devil was beyond need of help. He had died of sheer shock at being deserted by his fellows.

So that was the last straw. Coolie meekness had reached its final limit. There was open rebellion—and who will say that it was not about time? In screaming mobs the workmen commandeered the next supply train and arrived. They swarmed into and all over every car and fled from the accursed spot.

THAT, at last, was serious. The building of a British Imperial Government railway had been brought to a complete standstill! And just two lions had stopped it.

What did the management do? Did it call in a lion hunter? Did it send for anybody with any sort of experience in the ways of lions?

What it did was send up from the coast "several officers, civil, naval, and military, who sat up night after night in order to get a shot at our daring foes."

There's the sturdy mark of the bull dog! Sitting up night after night had proved to be futile for months. But that was the way the thing should be done and that was the way, by God, it would be done.

One of the amazing things about the whole story is the ingrained conviction of sport in connection with it. The shooting of lions was a sporting thing to do. Therefore eager amateur sportsmen took hair-raising chances in order to "bag" those lions. To call in a professional hunter would have been most unsporting, therefore the eradication of a deadly menace to human life remained a spare time chore for amateur—astoundingly amateur—sportsmen.

Interference with the imperial job brought the district officer up to look into this outrage. District officers are very nearly sacred. In their hands lies the supreme administration of thousands of square miles of territory, and lower officials stand in their presence.

The D. O.'s special train was due to

arrive at the new Tsavo station at six P. M. It didn't arrive. The lions, no respecters of persons, had raided the station and chased the signalman and station master to lock themselves into the baggage room.

Next morning the district officer limped in—alone! The D. O. knew all about these lions. Every man killed and eaten had been officially reported to him. He had come up to look into the killing of men by lions at night. Something untoward had suddenly stopped his train from entering the station.

Yet this man—we can only suppose, with a Kaiser-like conviction of his high sanctity—got out of his stalled train and started to walk to the station! At night! accompanied only by his orderly!

Perhaps it was his sanctity, after all, that enabled him to stagger into camp the next morning, ripped from shoulder to waist by four deep parallel claw marks. His less sacred orderly was eaten up, all but his awfully staring head.

Here was lese majesté. The district officer went back home and sent forth his minions of official vengeance. And did he send, at long last, a hunter?

He sent his superintendent of police with a score of constables!

Incredible? No. It belongs with entrenched officialdom, sturdy in its conviction of His Majesty's peace throughout his Empire. I know just such a district officer in far Burma who sent out a sergeant and a squad of military police to shoot a rogue elephant—and they shot the wrong elephant.

The superintendent of police marched his men into the jungles, and he marched them lamely back again.

Our harassed colonel's best thought then was to have another try with his patent trap. Happy thought. Coolies might refuse to be bait in the trap, but police constables could be ordered. So two miserable policemen were installed as bait. The trap's patent door was set to clang shut on any intruder. The white men took up strategic positions near by, the record does not say just where.

Everything went according to schedule. At midnight, although the policemen had a lantern burning in their heavily barred bait box, a lion walked into the trap! The iron door clanged.

Caught at last? Not so. The policemen were armed with rifles and plenty of ammunition. The lion was in a narrow enclosure within three feet of them.

You would think that to be the final act. But read the attested record.

"They were so terrified when the lion rushed in and began to lash himself madly against the bars of the cage that they completely lost their heads and were actually too unnerved to fire."

Digest that, and refrain from laughing. This is a tragedy of nearly a hundred human lives. The superintendent of police's strategic position was quite close by, but nowhere where he could see and get in a shot himself. The record of official astuteness does not explain why. The chief "shouted to his men and cheered them on" until they collected their wits and began to blaze loose. Now the record again.

"Then, when at last they did begin to fire, they fired with a vengeance. W. (the chief) and I were at right angles, and yet their bullets came whizzing all around us. Altogether they fired over a score of shots, and—" Now take this with reverent awe—"in the end succeeded only in blowing away one of the bars of the door, thus allowing our prize to make good his escape."

Comment is impossible.

Then the police forces went away again and our colonel was left to his routine of crawling through the scrub after tracks and sitting up in trees and shooting at shadows.

He even thinks he must have hit something sometimes. For furious growls answered some of the shooting and morning showed blood. But after a

few days of healing, the lions were always back and always got their man.

THE end came prosaically.

One of the lions made the mistake of jumping a man by daylight. He missed his man but killed the donkey on which he rode. The subsequent outcry frightened the lion from his meal. He would probably come back at night.

So, no tree being handy, our colonel, sticking to the same old attack, had a platform built on poles. Incredibly the record says, "about twelve feet high." Supinely dumb to the last. He knew that these lions jumped right over his exceptionally high and thick *bomas*. But on this platform he sat that night.

At midnight the lion came for his donkey. And this time the colonel got him.

One can feel almost sorry for so inglorious an end to a man-eater's career.

Modestly, as ever, our colonel writes, "The prize was indeed one to be proud of; his length from tip of nose to tip of tail was nine feet eight inches."

The second lion shortly afterwards made as silly a mistake. Perhaps the devil had grown tired of directing his wits against such poor competition. The lion made the mistake of coming to the same place two nights in succession. He had tried for some trolley men who were sleeping in a tree, but missed them.

Our colonel, convinced now for all time that the good old plan was the only one, sat up the following night in that tree, hoping as steadfastly as ever. And this time, at last, his hope was rewarded. The lion came, and in bright moonlight. He was hit, but managed to escape into the underbrush.

In the morning the indomitable soldier took up the blood trail. Incredible to the very end. He followed a wounded man-eating lion into the tangle of thorns and grass. His luck held. His courage had always held.

The lion charged. The colonel fired and knocked him rolling with a broken leg.

The lion got up and, on three legs, charged again. The colonel fired again; hit him, but could not stop him.

The common tragedy of all African hunting almost overcame dumb luck. The colonel reached for his spare gun, but the gun bearer was well up a tree. Only the fact that the lion was crippled enabled the colonel to make the same tree. The lion clawed up the tree trunk and bit great chunks from it. Then, foiled, he commenced to limp to cover.

With the retrieved spare rifle, the colonel fired again. The lion fell and lay motionless. The colonel, hopelessly incapable of caution, jumped from the tree and ran to the "dead" beast. The lion got up and charged him again, staggering slowly ahead, indomitable to the last heart beat. Two more shots, in chest and head, dropped him for the last time.

I repeat—a record of ferocity and cunning difficult to believe, and of courage and official stupidity equally difficult to believe.

Yet believe we must. Because it is attested by gentlemen of integrity. Because the late Theodore Roosevelt, on his trip to Africa, verified it. Because the skins of the two lions are in our Field Museum. And finally because the then Prime Minister of England, telling the House of Lords about their government railroad, stated—we might almost say, understated:

"The whole of the works were put to a stop for three weeks because a party of man-eating lions appeared in the locality and conceived a most unfortunate taste for our porters. Of course, it is difficult to work a railway under those conditions, and until we found an enthusiastic sportsman to get rid of these lions, our enterprise was seriously hindered."

Very, very typical! Perhaps it explains the whole thing.

PAID IN FULL
ONE PIGTAIL

by

H·Bedford-Jones

Old Bobstay let out a cry. "Into 'em, mates!"

REUBEN JAMES, sitting in his rags amidships, did not trouble to dodge the kicks of those who passed him. Slippered feet did not hurt, and if he dodged he might get worse than kicks. When they spat at him, he merely wiped his lean, unshaved cheek and glowered back, sullen fury in his gaze.

"Spit, blast you!" he muttered. "Some day I'll pay you out, you bloody heathen!"

The town and harbor of Tripoli, behind, were rosy-flushed with dawn, as the ketch *Mastico* headed out for Stamboul. Her mainmast set well aft, her fore rigging all jibs, the ketch was deeply loaded. James, late of the frigate *Philadelphia,* regarded the craft with angry gaze. Bound for Constantinople, he was, and not of his own will.

Trussed bullocks and sheep filled the well between the two half-decks. A score of women were under deck astern —tribute gifts to the sultan from the pasha of Tripoli. A few Turkish soldiers, one or two officers, a crew of thirty infernal pirates to man the blasted ketch and serve its four guns. On the platform in the stern, Rais Mahomet sat cross-

legged on a cushion, two Turkish officers smoking beside him. And Reuben James, freeborn but free no more, had to do the dirty work of attending to the cattle.

James squinted astern. A pretty sight and a sorry sight. Sunrise was gilding the white minarets and flat roofs of the town. It spread over the castle which housed the pasha. It glowed on the lower batteries and sea wall, the reefy harbor with corsairs and gunboats and fishing craft. And it touched up the *Philadelphia.*

She lay where she had been hauled from that outer reef that had snagged her two months ago. As James eyed her, his thoughts rioted back to the incredible scene when she lay canted on that reef, a swarm of pirate craft around, and, all hope of getting free destroyed, her flag coming down. Now she lay stripped, snugly moored under the guns of the batteries, the red crescent-flag afloat. And yonder in the castle tower, Captain Bainbridge and Lieutenant David Porter and the other officers, and her crew of three hundred men doing slave labor under the white-hot sun.

"You son of a camel! Get with your beasts, where you belong."

Rais Mahomet spat the order. A burly renegade who spoke all tongues; he had been the first over the rail of the *Philadelphia,* with a slap in the face for young Porter and a grab at his watch.

Reuben James stood up. From the corner of his eye, he caught a fleck of canvas plastered against the horizon of blue water and blue sky, off the larboard quarter. It sent a quiver through his veins, brought a new light into his eyes.

"I'll not for long be jumping to your word and your foot, you hulking lump of blubber," he growled.

"Come here!" The *rais* grinned at him, and James knew the *bastinado* was in prospect. "You regard yourself well, eh? It is well known that your infidel nation pays tribute to my master the pasha; why has the ransom asked for you and your comrades been refused?"

"If you ask me, there'll be pay made in powder and ball," snapped James. A yell checked him. The *rais* and the two Turks leaped up.

Shouts pealed from the men along the decks. The *rais* bawled lusty orders, excitement in his voice. A flood of extra canvas forward billowed on the breeze, and the ketch went plunging on a new course.

James, forgotten, made his way to the waist gangways, and watched from there as the scrap of canvas grew and grew. A schooner, boring in like a hound on prey; the heavy-laden ketch was no match for her. Wild exultation in his eyes, James watched as she grew, until he could count the ports, until he could catch the red and white stripes, the spangled blue corner, of her ensign.

Orders bawled. Men caught at him, cuffed him aft once more.

"What ship is that, you dog?" demanded the *rais.*

"Schooner *Enterprise,*" and Reuben James chuckled in his tanned throat. "The same that whipped your corsair *Tripoli,* off Malta." His chuckle became a wide grin. "You remember, her *rais* got five hundred strokes of the cane and was sent riding on the stern of an ass by your precious pasha? You'll get worse, I hope."

Furious, Rais Mahomet lashed out an order, and then plucked at the curved knife and bared it. James, caught by two men, was held helpless. The burly *rais* plunged at him, caught him by the pigtail, and slashed for his throat. Frantically, James ducked and jerked aside; the knife shore through his pigtail and was poised for a second lunge, when one of the Turkish officers intervened—not in mercy, but in wisdom. The schooner was close, would be aware of the action here. Even as the jabbering filled the air, a gun boomed and

the shot whizzed overhead, to plunge into the water.

Murder was forgotten. The canvas of the ketch fluttered down. And Reuben James, with a hot oath, picked up the sheared pigtail.

All these weeks he had clung to this proudest mark of a seaman, the greased, knotted and bound slip of hair hanging down his neck. And now it lay in his hand, and his hair was ragged. He cursed again, then slipped it under his shirt and stared with wide eyes at the boat dancing over the waves from the schooner. Free! With a yell, he leaped to the rail and waved exultantly.

HE WAS at the rail when Midshipman Tom Macdonough came over the side, hanger in hand, blue eyes widening on the ragged figure.

"Hello! You're an American!"

Grinning, James saluted. "Reuben James, sir, quarter gunner of the *Philadelphia*."

"Why, I know your face!" exclaimed the boy. "You were in the starboard watch with me!"

"Aye, sir. And you played in luck."

Macdonough flushed. "Meaning that I was off in charge of a prize when the frigate was wrecked? I'd rather be sharing quarters with my shipmates—but I've gammed enough. Who's in command of this craft?"

Reuben James flicked a thumb.

"The sour-lime face with a beard tacked on, with those two Turks, sir."

The boarding crew were over the rail, cutlasses out, marines' muskets at the ready. Young Macdonough strode aft, his boot heels ringing. There was a snarl of talk, then Rais Mahomet took his captor below for the ship's papers. They came up; Macdonough sent the *rais* into the boat, and came to where James still waited.

"Come along. Lieutenant Decatur will want to talk with you."

"Decatur! On the *Enterprise*?"

"He was transferred from the *Essex*. You know him?"

"Aye, sir! When I was overboard and foundering in a heavy sea, in West Indies waters, didn't he jump over and hold me up till a boat came?"

James tumbled down, and the boat put across for the schooner, the *rais* and the two Turkish officers uttering furious threats. Once on the schooner's deck, they blustered at the slim, trim officer who received them—Decatur, in blue cutaway coat and white cassimere breeches, curly black hair and bright, vigorous features.

The crew were crowding around Reuben James, amidships, plying him with curious questions, when his name was called. He was wanted aft. When he stepped to the quarter-deck, Decatur nodded to him quickly.

"Here, my man! This rascally *rais* claims he's a Turk, not a Tripolitan, and his ketch a Turkish craft, in the sultan's service. These officers back him up. Know anything about the man or the craft?"

James grinned with solid satisfaction.

"Aye, sir. He's a renegade, they say, not a Turk at all. We had a cargo of gifts from the pasha to the sultan, true, but the ketch belongs in Tripoli. She's one of them that attacked the *Philadelphia* when we grounded, and this *rais* was the first man aboard us. When they had tied Lieutenant Porter's arms, this devil clapped him across the face and then stole his watch."

"So?" Decatur whitened, and swung around. There was a "*slap!*" as the flat of his hand wiped the scowl from the bearded face. "That for Porter, you damned liar! Into irons you go—take him away, and the two others likewise. Mr. Macdonough, make up a prize crew to put aboard the ketch, and we'll report to the flagship." He turned, and his hand clapped down on the shoulder of James. "You're from the *Philadel-*

phia, I hear. Splendid! Hello, I've seen you before. Where?"

James grinned anew. "I'm the man you dived for from the shrouds that time—"

"Of course!" Decatur's hand clapped down again. "James, Reuben James! Well met, indeed. What news of Captain Bainbridge and the others?"

A roar broke in from Rais Mahomet as he was dragged off.

"I'll cut off your ears for this, some day!" came his voice, with a torrent of threats. Decatur looked after him with a scornful smile. Then James made answer to the question.

"Why, sir, the officers are up in the tower of the pasha's castle; the rest of us have been put to slave work. I was sold as a slave to this Rais Mahomet."

"And the *Philadelphia?* Is it true she's been overhauled?"

"Aye, sir; a fine prize for their navy. They've mounted her with forty guns and manned her with five hundred pirates; she's moored under the guns of the castle and the big fort and batteries."

"Hm! Captain Preble offered $350,000 ransom for all hands, but the pasha raised it to half a million; that rascal needs a trimming. And they've got the frigate. That's bad."

"We did the best we could, sir," James said defensively. "The reef wasn't charted. The craft we were after made over it safe enough, and as we were coming about the reef nipped us by the stern, hard and fast with our bows in the air. We lightened ship, shifted all weight for'ard, with the cursed gunboats swarming at us—"

"Yes, we've heard the story," said Decatur. "Can she be cut out?"

James shook his head. "She's yonder behind the reefs, with armed craft and shore guns to be reckoned with, besides her own guns and crew. To get close enough, board her, take her, fetch her out—I hardly think so, sir."

"Then, by heavens, we'll have to destroy her where she is! And this schooner might do the business, or—" Decatur paused. His black eyes flashed thoughtfully to the ketch. James caught the look and spoke eagerly.

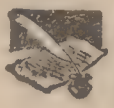
"The ketch, sir, for sure! We could get in with her before they suspected anything wrong. I've picked up some of the lingo and could answer any hail—"

"You?" Decatur regarded him, brows lifted. "You'd risk going back?"

"Aye, sir. All I ask is to serve under you and set foot on the frigate's deck again. I calculate to pay somebody back for my pigtail and with interest to boot."

He drew the severed pigtail from his shirt, to display it. His lean cheeks colored with anger. "I aim to rap a head or two, and I'd like nothing better than such a chance!"

"You'll get it." Decatur smiled, then looked off toward Tripoli, and his smile died. "A fine ship; I saw her launched. My father was her first commander—well, go for'ard and make yourself snug. I'll have you listed for duty aboard here. And now, back we go. We're due for a change of weather."



A CHANGE of weather indeed. The schooner held off to rejoin the blockading squadron, Captain Edward Preble in command, but the wind came up with her, and a gale drove the ships into the port of Syracuse for shelter.

There, the officers and crew of the ketch were set at liberty, the ketch was mustered into the service and renamed the *Intrepid.* The women slaves were turned loose. The beef and mutton came in handy. And the gales blew, week upon week—the same gales that eighteen hundred years before had forced the cornships of Rome to winter, wherever caught. January passed, and February came in. At eight bells in the

afternoon of February 3rd, the bosun's pipe trilled.

"A-a-all hands . . . to hear orders . . ."

The crew crowded the schooner's waist. At the head of his officers Decatur, rigged full dress from chapeau to tasseled half-boots, read aloud a letter.

U. S. Frigate *Constitution*,
Syracuse Harbor, Jan. 31, 1804.

To Lieutenant Stephen Decatur,
U. S. Schooner *Enterprise*.

Sir:

You are hereby ordered to take command of the prize ketch, which I have named the *Intrepid*, and prepare her with all possible despatch for a cruise of thirty-five days, with full allowance of water and provisions for seventy-five men. . . .

Reuben James, listening with the other men, felt his heart leap. It had come! He caught only fragmentary sentences from the remainder of the letter—words and phrases that lingered with him, confirming all his wildest hopes.

. . . for boarding and burning the *Philadelphia*, in the harbor of Tripoli. . . . The destruction of the *Philadelphia* is an object of great importance. . . . It will be well, in order to prevent alarm, to carry all by the sword. May God prosper you in this enterprise.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

Edward Preble.

"Hurray!" James led the quick, yelping shout. "Hurray! To the *Philadelphia!*"

Lieutenant Decatur folded the letter and stuck it under his belt, lifted his chapeau and ran his fingers through curly black hair. With throat hoarse and blood pounding, James elbowed forward. He could guess what was coming next.

"You heard the orders from the commodore," said Decatur. "The ketch sails at sundown. You must understand it's a dangerous mission. I must board the *Philadelphia* in the face of her guns and the shore batteries, clear her decks with pike and cutlass, set her well afire between decks, leave her with her eighteen-pounders charged, and get away when I've scuttled her before the magazine blows up—if I can. Captain Preble allows me seventy men and officers of my choosing, with five midshipmen from the flagship to make up the seventy-five. I'll order no one to this duty. You men who want to, step out three paces."

Every man made the move. A chorus of voices burst forth.

"You'll take me, sir—old Dick Bobstay!" "And me, sir—Jess Smart, sir!" Reuben James saw his own fist swing up, heard his own voice bawl: "By Gawd, sir, I'm first! You'll not forget me, sir—James! You promised I'd have the chance to pay those devils out for my pigtail!"

Decatur laughed.

"I can't take eighty men. Report to the surgeon for a going over. I'll take the sixty who show up best. Must leave a working crew aboard here—"

Reuben James was off like a shot, and was first to be passed by the surgeon.

Sixty-two in the lot: the surgeon himself, Macdonough, and the three lieutenants, Thorn, Lawrence, and Joe Bainbridge, son of the captain held by the pasha. And a Sicilian, one Salvatore Catalano, who knew every reef in the Tripoli harbor, for pilot. Tom Anderson, midshipman, came over from the *Syren* to make up the seventy, with five more lads from the flagship.

Now it was pitch in and work for all hands. The ketch had to be loaded with stores and water, oakum balls and bundles of pitch pine, casks of fireship powder, bags of powder for the eighteen-pounders of the *Philadelphia*. And that night she was off, under convoy of the brig *Syren*.

Off to no pleasure cruise on summer seas, but to wind and weather that wracked her sixty tons, held her low waist almost awash, and threatened momentarily to send her plunging under.

The combustibles and stores needed the shelter below the decks, and flesh and bones could take the weather as found. So they did, indeed. Decatur and his four senior officers had the little cabin, and everyone else berthed anywhere.

"Cabin's full o' stowaways, anyhow. So am I," and James fell to scratching busily. It was the twelfth day out, and the last six had been spent beating off the African coast in a gale of wind and cold rain.

One glimpse of Tripoli harbor, a-swim with white breakers, and the *Syren* signaled to put about and stand out to sea. The ketch was near foundered, the fat bacon was turned rancid. But during the night, the wind had gone down.

"It's fairing, mates, it's fairing!" Old Bobstay sat up, clawed his hairy chest, cocked a bleared eye to gray sky and water, and stretched his bare arms, the size of topmasts and blue with tattooing. He heaved himself off the bed of casks on the deck.

"Fairing, sure as you're born. Afore another day, we'll be aboard the *Philadelphy.*"

"And high time, too," spoke up a man bitterly. "Every time we rolled gunnels under, I thought we were gone."

"Huh?" Bobstay spat in scorn. "A capful o' wind, with the cap'n and officers nursing us, and broad water all around? No, says I; thank God for a plank under me and no lee shoals handy! Who'd want to be ashore in weather like we've had, huh? Dangerous, it is. Seems a shame to be firin' the *Philadelphia,* don't it? Couldn't she be worked out, Rube?"

James shook his head. "The lower rigging's in place, but the yards are down, the topmasts lowered, and her foremast went by the board when we tried to lighten ship. She's moored as a battery. They aim to commission her in the spring."

"No, I cal'ate we'll have no time even to tow her," Bobstay said regretfully. "We board her, lay the fire, and clear out ag'in to the *Syren.* Them's the orders. And we'll get a proper peltin' doing it."

James borrowed Bobstay's hunk of hardtwist and gnawed a chunk from the rope, ramming it into his cheek.

"It won't be more'n ten to one," he said cheerfully. "Cap'n Stewart offered more men from the *Syren,* but did the lieutenant take 'em? Not him. 'Fewer the numbers, bigger the prize money,' or some such words."

"No prize money if we burn her, you consarned fool," said Bobstay. James grinned.

"Maybe it was glory he mentioned, not prize money. Well, what of it?"

"Suits me," the shellback said. "The more fight for us as is in it, the more grog for them as comes out. Hurray! Look'ee! The *Syren* has tacked for us. Signals flying."

DECATUR was out from the cabin, glass to eye. The men clustered stiffly as the signals were answered; then came orders and the bosun's whistle. To the shifted helm and the haul on the sheets, the *Intrepid* came about on a long reach for the coast of Tripoli.

Near noon, the coast raised. In midafternoon it stood clear; with eight bells, the white reaches of the city showed up. The *Syren* tacked off shore again, leaving the ketch to make the harbor alone. The brig would follow after dark and launch boats in support of the boarding party, in case matters went wrong.

Slow and careful work, now, as the harbor opened under the setting sun, with a drag hung astern to check speed. Reuben James settled the red cap on his head and squinted down the deck. A dozen men showed, all like himself in Italian seamen's smocks and red caps; everyone else huddled below, or under tarpaulins. Old Bobstay was at the

helm, Catalano and the lieutenant beside him, in the same disguise. Eyes would be watching from castle and shipping. A Levantine sponger or coral fisher would arouse no comment.

James worked his fresh quid of hard-twist into a comfortable fighting wad, and, perched atop the canvas-covered powder barrels, put his hand under his shirt and patted something stitched there. His hair had grown long again and a new pigtail hung at the back of his neck, but he had taken precious care of the old one, for reasons of his own. He eyed the slow progress of the ketch appreciatively.

The breeze still held a trifle fresh, and the lieutenant, too smart to signal any false move by taking in canvas, was fiddling for time. That drag held down her speed to a bare crawl. Voices lifted along the deck, as orders were given out and repeated for accuracy. A party to tend the spring for making fast and warping in, another to the boat that towed astern. A division to the gun deck of the *Philadelphia*, another to the berth deck; others to cockpit and store rooms, with pitch and torch; another to hold the ketch ready for cutting the grapnels and shoving off. Macdonough and a gun crew to serve two of the eighteen-pounders down the main hatchway and blow out her bottom. Cutlass and pike and boarding hatchet; no shooting, no yelling.

Now the sun was down. The ketch was in the harbor mouth, the breeze was dying, and the drag was cast off before it might be sighted to cause suspicion. To Catalano's orders she glided into the main channel, on the longest course. Surf was running along the reef and bar of the west passage, the short course, and she avoided it.

The crescent moon, scant of the first quarter, hung in the west. With bare steerage way the ketch idled along, men and officers silent now. James shifted his quid as the view opened. By the lord, here they were in the shark's jaws —and shark's jaws indeed! The revelation was abrupt and disconcerting.

Three corsair cruisers, two galleys, nineteen gunboats, widely curving out to right and left; in the very throat of this death funnel, the frigate herself, dotted with battle-lanterns aglow. The castle and fort and batteries towered behind her.

Old Bobstay, with never a tremor of his leathery face, held straight for the frigate. She was alert enough. Heads dotted her hammock rail, not a hundred yards distant now. Her bulk shut off the breeze, and the *Intrepid* faltered. Then a hail leaped from her, sharp and challenging.

"We are from Malta," Catalano calmly made answer in the Lingua Franca universally understood. "We lost our anchor in the storm, and seek permission to ride the night in your shelter."

Consultation, then reply: "Allah is great, is good! Come on with a line."

The ketch was slowly barging in, too slowly for Decatur. The boat astern was pulled up, a line passed down, and the boat made for the fore-chains of the frigate. A voice bellowed out at them to lay by the larboard quarter, that a boat would be sent with another line. Reuben James came erect and quivering. That voice! He would have known it again in hell. Rais Mahomet was back here, was in command of the frigate!

A cloud dimmed the thin moonlight, and the water darkened. Catalano began to talk glibly, faking news from Malta. The boat, stealing out, had made fast its line and headed off the boat from the frigate.

The lines were in, the boat was back; the men set their arms to the inhaul. The forward line whipped out of the water, the other one lost its slack. Bows on, the ketch sidled in. Ten fathom to go, eight—the rail of the frigate was dotted with more shapes. Six fathom,

five; the cloud was off the moon. Twenty feet from the frigate, a puff of land breeze struck the ketch and set her aback with taut lines, canted the frigate until all her broadside grinned down.

The *Intrepid* hung framed in the moonglow between the shadows of two masts. A fair sight, for half a minute. Bearded faces stared down. Then the voice of Rais Mahomet, lifting in a roar of alarm.

"You lie! I see your anchors—no Maltese, but *Americanos!*"

A frenzied babel welled up. "Infidels! *Americanos!* Cut the lines! To the guns!" Bare feet slapped, figures darted along the rail, knives hacked at the lines. Old Bobstay, leaving the helm to pounce on a pike and cutlass, let out a cry. "They're takin' the tompions out them guns—into 'em, mates!"

"Haul!" ordered Decatur in trumpet tones. "Stand by to board!"

Men darted up, surged to the lines; the ketch moved to the haul. She was in the gleam of the battle lanterns, she was under the guns, and bumped, swinging broadside to the final haul on the lines.

Boarders away!

It was a jostle, a wild scramble to beat the officers over the rail. James was leaping for the main-chains, when Decatur elbowed him aside, and Bobstay jerked him back, cursing hotly. Midshipman Laws tried to duck through a gundeck port and stuck there, his brace of pistols caught between gun and sill, and his hinder end handy.

"A stepping stone!" bawled Bobstay, and went up with a leap, others following while the hapless midshipman shrilled curses. Decatur's foot slipped as he reached for the rail. Morris, from the *Constitution*, was up and past him, planted foot on his shoulder, and dived over. James caught a glimpse of all this as he himself went clawing up and over, and landed on the frigate's deck. On the quarterdeck, by heaven!

An instant, to take breath. There the Moors were running, gathering, breaking out weapons, sending up a bedlam of shouts and cries and orders, scarcely alive as yet to what was happening. Decatur leaped out, said never a word, was at them with steel bared. James ran beside him, the others trooped close behind; they were down the deck with a rush, slap for the massing robed figures.

THE ferocity of that rush, the wild savage sweep of it, the silence of it, struck panic into the enemy; but they fought. James found himself in a wild confusion of striking figures. A yelling swordsman uprose before him, and his cutlass sliced out; a spurt of blood, and he was past. Another was there, thrusting for him with a pike. He parried the thrust, drove inside the wooden shaft and slashed. The bearded head wobbled, the body dragged it down. On into the push of breasting men, the thud of pike and ax, hissed breaths and groaning curses. And, of a sudden, all was clear ahead.

Victory! The Moors broke, went scuttling anywhere, went diving overboard. James ran on, helping to clear the last of them from the forecastle. Then back, to rout out the skulkers. The deck was crimsoned and littered, but not a man of the seventy-five was down.

A yell broke from Reuben James. Here beside the mainmast, he found what he had been seeking, a burly figure, scarlet jacket a-glimmer, scimiter flashing. Rais Mahomet and no other, trying to rally his men. James rushed, and the *rais* turned, his back to the mast; turned and slashed, and slashed again.

James parried. To his horror, the Damascus steel sheared through his cutlass as though it had been cardboard; he was down, his arm numbed, his head ringing. Only the flat of that curved

blade had hit him, but he was down and helpless. Another slash—he ducked franctically and went sliding in blood. The stroke missed.

"Allah!" The yell of Rais Mahomet was exultant. He swung around. "Ha, you dog! I swore to cut your ears off; now the head goes with them!"

It was Decatur standing there, slim and straight, straddling the figure of James and holding Rais Mahomet with cut and parry, but only for an instant. To a rasp of locked blades, the lieutenant's cutlass shot from his slashed fingers. He lunged forward, caught at the renegade's arm, and with bloody fingers tried to free the long curved dagger that hung from the man's neck. Mahomet, cursing, shortened his scimiter for a finishing blow.

Old Bobstay came in with a roar, knocking Decatur aside. His reddened boarding pike, held in both hands, caught the curved blade in midstroke. The point drove on and ran the burly *rais* through the chest.

"There, blast your eyes!" bellowed old Bobstay, and wrenched his pike clear of the falling man.

James writhed clear. Decatur was already off and away, his voice ringing at the firing parties. Young Macdonough bolted up the main hatchway.

"Gun deck all clear, sir! Not a rat left alive. Some got through the ports. They're making for the shore."

"All hands to gundeck and berthdeck. Remember your stations, and use the battle lanterns for torches. Lively's the word!"

As he crowded for the hatchways, Reuben James had a brief glance at shore and harbor. Lights twinkled, batteries and ships were roused, the beat of drums and a discord of shouts and hails mingled in rising tumult. Then he was at work with the others.

The balls of tarry oakum and the bundles of pitchy splinters were passed up through the ports. Their arms full, men ran hither and thither, laying the oakum, lighting the kindling from blazing lantern-wicks, until all the gundeck was smoky and lurid with the sizzling combustion. From the deck below, fumes were mounting.

"Here's foretaste of hell, sure enough!" coughed James, staggering to an open port for a breath of air, only to draw away with an oath.

Right enough. The *Philadelphia* was tight against weather, seasoned dry. The flames caught and spread, sucked to ports and hatchways. Officers and men, half blinded and smothered by the black smoke, reeled through the crimson-shot pall, looking like fiends busy in the infernal pit. In no time at all, it seemed to James, the whole gundeck was in a roar as fire joined to fire. From below mounted the crackling blast of flames.

They went swarming, joined by the hasty berthdeck squads, clambering to the open of the deck above, with flames licking after them.

"Lieutenant!" hailed Morris. "Do we shoot her bottom out?"

"No use," Decatur replied. "She's afire from stem to stern. Lawrence! Have you made the count?"

"Aye, sir! Every man here. Some hurt, but none dead."

"We're standing over a furnace. Bainbridge reports every gun shotted. All hands to the ketch, and quick about it!"

All hands? Not Decatur; he was elsewhere. Reuben James glimpsed him, and followed, while the others pressed to the rail. He caught a muffled curse, and found old Dick Bobstay at his elbow.

"Where's the lieutenant off to? Stick with him, Rube—"

"There he is." James halted, as Decatur appeared from the after companionway, clutching an American flag. The two ran to help him, as he made for the mizzen. Decatur was painfully, with his cut hand, bending on the flag when they

joined him and completed the job. James sent the flag up.

"We're like to roast for a rag!" and Bobstay cursed, his toes curling with the heat.

"She'll go down under her own colors," Decatur snapped. "You two men —over the rail with you! I'll follow—"

All three turned, as a voice lifted at them chokingly.

"For the love of God—mercy—"

It was the renegade, Rais Mahomet, crawling in a frenzy across the deck, bloody of chest. He flopped down with a groan.

"He's in hell ahead o' time," James grunted.

"Not dead." Decatur peered down at the figure. "We can't leave him, men—"

Bobstay shoved forward and stooped. "Stand by, mate, while I put my grapnels on his hull! That's right—"

James caught hold, with another growling oath. Rais Mahomet was dying, right enough, but they could not leave him in this inferno.

"Damned if I ain't near foundered!" Bobstay reeled in the billow of smoke that hit them. "Lay the course, mate—"

They made the rail, heaved the dying figure over, and were on the deck of the ketch, depositing their burden by the unused powder barrels. A sharp cry reached them.

"Lieutenant! She's all afire; the for'ard magazine will let loose anytime!"

Decatur was still above, back to the rail, looking upward. His reddened hand went to the salute. Then, the captured flag of the frigate over his arm, he came down with a rush.

"Shove off! Cut the lines. Out with the sweeps."

Hatchets and cutlasses hacked at the lines. Sweeps were run out, ramming at the hull of the frigate. The ketch swung out by the bows, and hung. All the sky above them was crimson, the harbor was lightened as by a fiery sunset. The frigate's ports were lurid eyes, and her hull quivered with the roar of the flames.

Desperation filled them all, as the ketch still hung. A gust of breeze came from the land. Flames spurted from the larboard ports of berthdeck and gundeck, licked for the ketch. Embers were smoking on the forward tarpaulin, covering the powder kegs.

"The powder, men! Look out for that powder!"

James, who had been stooping over the figure of Rais Mahomet, limp and quiet now, threw himself flat on the canvas. Others joined him, making a shield of bodies to cover the kegs and ready cartridges. Bobstay was alongside him, cursing the embers.

"By gosh, this is wuss'n them Turkish crawlers when they took hold! Them crawlers will get burned off, anyhow—wow!"

The sweeps bent, but still the ketch hung under the heated guns. A rush of feet, yelps from excited men, then Decatur's voice again.

"She's free! Give way!"

THE *Intrepid* righted. A stern hawser had held her canted. She shot off in a swing to larboard, and the cool night air swept between her and the *Philadelphia*.

Coughing, slapping sparks away, Reuben James sat up as the danger lessened. Bobstay was up and making for his post at the helm. What a sight they all were—singed, smoked black, wounded. A laugh broke from James as he saw Decatur, bolt upright on the half poop, gazing back at the blazing frigate. A laugh of excitement, of fierce and savage exultation, of grim work well done.

Helped by the sweeps, the ketch bowled on before light airs, traversing a ruddy lane of gunfire; that any ship could thus escape unscathed, seemed impossible. Shore batteries were blast-

ing wildly, the war craft to right and left had opened up, the guns in the fort were crashing. Plunging solid shot and spattering canister paced the little ketch, so that she moved upon a path of spray. Yet not a man had been killed; not a man was killed now.

James, like all the rest, stared back, careless of the shot. The *Philadelphia* was glorious. The whole background of fort and batteries and town was alight as the flames swarmed up her masts and spread, curling from her ports until her entire hull was aglow like a furnace. Above her, the flag, her own flag, tossed in the swirling air.

Then her guns began to let loose in thunderous voice, discharging to larboard and starboard, salute to the *Intrepid*, defiance to the enemy. The solid shot slashed the water, crashed against the walls inshore, hammered the castle itself.

"Hurray!" yelled James in frenzied jubilation. "Hurray! There's a peepshow for Cap'n Bainbridge and the rest! There's three hundred of our boys ashore who know we've been calling, anyhow!"

"There go her hawsers!" somebody shouted.

True. Her hawsers had parted and she was drifting inshore as though for closer quarters; her guns were still booming. The ketch, now in the outer channel, lay to, her sweeps poised, every eye gripped on the spectacle.

"Three cheers for her!" shouted Decatur. "Hip, hip hurray—"

"And three more for the ketch!" bawled James, as the cheer died. "Hurray—"

Then it came. With one tremendous upward belch of flame and smoke, the frigate rose in fragments that showered sky and water. The concussion was a veritable thunderclap, echoing back from the walls of the town, and rocking the *Intrepid* as she lay. The harbor was plunged into blackness, broken only by a fitful glow from hull and wreckage.

"She's gone," lifted Decatur's voice. "A gallant end for a gallant ship. Head for the *Syren*, Lawrence. Keep a lookout for her boats."

The canvas filled, the sweeps came in, the *Intrepid* bore seaward.

They came to the clustered boats. The riding lights of the brig twinkled greeting; a storm of cheers hailed them as the ketch came alongside. Captain Stewart's face, anxious in the light of the lantern beside him, peered over the rail. Decatur's words came clear; he was almost besides James and Bobstay.

"We did it, sir!"

"Thank God you're back, Decatur! You were too quick for me. I came in as close as was proper, and the boats were ready."

Bobstay nudged James.

"Get that, Rube?" he growled. "What's one man's meat is another man's pi'zen, you bet!"

"Anyone hurt?"

"None seriously."

"I suppose you didn't bring any of Othose pirates off the frigate?"

Decatur laughed.

"Aye, her captain." He turned. "Oh, there you are, James! Where's that fellow you and Bobstay put aboard?"

"He's here, but he's past keeping," said James.

A lantern swung down. Decatur took a look at the stiffening figure of Rais Mahomet, then he lifted his head and stared at James.

"That's funny!" he said. "What—well, never mind—"

He turned away. Bobstay held the lantern down, and then lifted a grinning face and guffawed at Reuben James.

"So that's what you done with it, you slab-sided pelican!"

Protruding from the grinning jaws of Rais Mahomet was the shorn end of a pigtail.

"All shipshape and Navy style," said Reuben James complacently.

Fighting desperately . . a ton of bone, muscle and blubber . . .

The Adventures of Dr. Cook

A fact story

By TED LEITZELL

LIVING quietly in Buffalo is an aging man of seventy-three. He has bright blue eyes, a gentle smile, and a kindly manner. Few would believe on first meeting that here was one of the most wildly publicized of men, one whose spectacular and tragic career stands without parallel in human history. He is Frederick A. Cook, storm center of the Polar controversy which first raged nearly thirty years ago, and which is not yet settled.

It makes no great difference today whether he really reached the North Pole or not. Nor does it matter greatly if the later charges against him were based on truth. The tragedy of the situation is that the campaign against him created an image of Dr. Cook in the public press which is the image of a man

who has never existed. Behind this shadowy figure that was born in the heat of passion stands a man, the real Dr. Cook, one of the greatest adventurers the world has ever known.

Few remember the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of forty years ago, when for the first time on record a party of men spent the cold Antarctic night locked fast in the southern ice pack. Yet no poleward expedition, before or since, has brought back a greater wealth of scientific data or cut a larger gap from the unknown. And no finer tale has ever come from the frigid circumpolar deserts than this story of Dr. Cook on the *Belgica*.

He joined the expedition at Rio de Janeiro as surgeon, a volunteer without pay. During the important studies of Indians in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego Cook's duties were enlarged; he was made responsible for photography, anthropology, and for camp equipment.

After leaving South America they sailed south into the unknown, sounding the ocean bottom, discovering and classifying new species in the teeming hordes of bird and sea life that surrounded them, and correcting errors on charts that had been made by casual sealers through the early years. They discovered a new strait leading along the Antarctic continent into the South Pacific, and woke up one morning to find themselves caught fast in the slowly moving ice pack. This did not alarm them, for the staunch little sealer was reinforced to meet just such contingencies.

Cook and the young Norwegian first mate, Roald Amundsen, soon became close friends. Each had dreamed of exploration toward the poles, each had had trying experiences on northern ice caps. Now they formed the habit of spending hours together.

"Cook," said the Norwegian one day, "what do you think of the way most of our northern explorers imitate the Eskimos in every way?"

"The Eskimos have a lot to teach us," replied the doctor. "Kane and others nearly froze to death because they tried to work in woolens. Their clothing would get saturated with sweat and be useless.

"In 1891, after Peary broke his leg and we were in a bad way, several of us made friends with a group of natives. They set up their winter camp near us, and taught us that fur clothing open at the waist for ventilation was the best protection for heavy work in cold weather."

"Sure, that's true enough, but how about the rest of it?"

"I can't see any more reason to believe that the Eskimo is right in everything he does than I would for using bone needles. After all, they are limited in materials, and make the best they can from what they have. Their sledges, for example, aren't as strong as those our children back home get for Christmas."

"What kind of a sledge would you use?"

Cook told his ideas of the lightness, flexibility, and strength required. From conversation it was a short step to actual construction. Solid runner sledges were far too heavy and cumbersome. They split easily, and lacked the spring needed to withstand the constant shock of sledging over pack ice.

The sledge designed by Cook and Amundsen was far different. The framework was of well seasoned hickory, curved to shape, and braced with cross struts like the girders of a bridge. The upstanders were higher than on the Eskimo sledge, and fixed with a movable framework which would support a double-walled silk tent over the body of the sledge.

Runners were shod with iron strips. Portions of the frame could be removed to serve as the frame for a canvas boat, which in the meantime would serve as a tarpaulin.

Their finished sledge was strong enough to support up to one thousand pounds, as compared with the five to six

hundred maximum for sledges of the old solid runner construction. Moreover, there was a saving of over seventy-five pounds in weight. Solid runner sledges now in the Museum of Natural History weigh about one hundred fifty pounds; the Cook-Amundsen type weigh less than seventy-five.

It was with sledges of this type, and other camp equipment they devised on the *Belgica*, that Amundsen reached the South Pole in 1911. Scott, who found Amundsen's South Pole camp a short time later, perished on the return march. He had a much more elaborate and better financed expedition than the Norwegian, but died within eleven miles of a food cache because his equipment was less practical.

With few exceptions this type of sledge has been used by every successful Arctic explorer since that time. Stefansson, in his long stay among the islands north of the American continent, photographed one which had withstood four years of heavy work. Cook took two on his polar dash, abandoned one on his return, and took the other with him to Greenland, although it had been taken apart during the winter and portions of it used to manufacture weapons.

THE staff of the *Belgica* spent long hours gathering scientific data. There was life in the sea below, and the pack ice teemed with birds, penguins, and seals. Cook experimented with photography under these new light conditions, and when their supply of chemicals ran low devised a method of fixing negatives in a bath of deadly prussic acid. Lieutenant Lecointe, the executive officer (later director of the Brussels Observatory and secretary of the International Bureau of Polar Research), kept steadily at his hydrographic work. Lieutenant Danco found the zigzag drift of the *Belgica* a never-ending source of new data for his elaborate studies of magnetism. Racovitza, the Rumanian naturalist, eagerly studied the many unclassified forms of life which surrounded them.

One night Cook took a notion to try his new sleeping bag. Crawling over the rough ice floes, he found a sheltered spot that met with his ideas of comfort. Shivering until his teeth chattered, he burrowed in the warm furs. Soon he was comfortable and went to sleep.

During the night the wind changed direction and began blowing directly in the air hole. In a short time his hair and beard were frozen fast to the fur of his sleeping bag. He wakened and tried to turn over, but was stopped by an agony of hair pulling. By morning his head was solidly sheathed in ice.

Amundsen rose early that morning and went out hunting seal. He saw the dark speck where the doctor slept, stalked closer, and waited for better light. He raised his rifle to fire, and just in time noticed that something looked strange about this seal. His laughter at Cook's predicament was not unmixed with relief.

As the long night approached, members of the expedition began to grow listless. Their gums grew spongy; eyes and ankles began to show puffiness. Strong men weakened as once hard muscles grew flabby. Heavy exertion brought shortness of breath and painful laboring of the heart muscles. One by one their appetites grew poorer.

Mentally they reflected their physical condition. Cheery greetings turned to snarls. Men growled at annoying trivialities, swore that whoever outfitted the expedition was deliberately trying to make things unpleasant. Hours were spent in listless contemplation of opposite walls. They grumbled about the moisture that condensed around their bunks, complained at the effort required to do their daily round of work.

Gloom increased as physical symptoms became more pronounced. Many complained of headaches and insomnia.

Lowered vitality brought on indigestion and dyspepsia. Some were troubled with neuralgia and rheumatism. Lieutenant Danco, who suffered from an old heart lesion, had to give up all work.

Alone of the entire company Cook remained cheery and in good health. He had learned from hard Arctic experience that raw meat was the only effective antiscorbutic available in the frozen world. His own diet included rare steaks from seal and penguin, but none of the others would follow his lead, for the stuff tastes like liver fried in cod liver oil.

One day Lecointe came to Cook and said:

"Doctor, I am going to die. I have put my affairs in shape and made my will. I want you to take charge of it for me."

"Nonsense, Georges, you are not going to die. You are going to do just as I tell you, and get well and strong again."

"No. I have a feeling that it is all over for me."

Cook talked to him and finally persuaded the Belgian to make a fight. Then he banned all civilized food from his diet except canned milk and cranberry sauce. This was not because other foods would do any harm, but because Cook wanted him to be so hungry that he would eat the evil tasting seal and penguin prescribed. To the diet Cook added a baking technic, placing Lecointe naked before an open fire. In a week the lieutenant was out of bed; in two weeks he was well and strong as ever.

Vitamins had not been discovered in that day, nor was radiant therapy even a part of medicine's dream. But Cook knew that fresh meat would cure and prevent scurvy, and he had connected the drop in physical activity, that dread ailment that occurs to all men in the long night, with the absence of sunlight.

In spite of protest, he persuaded other members of the expedition to take the same repellent food and spend the same daily hour baking before the fire. Danco said he would rather die than eat such vile tasting stuff. He did, and his death had a further disheartening effect on the miserable group.

Every day Cook journeyed out over the pack, killing seals and penguins and bringing in their carcasses. Slowly the new diet began to show results on all members of the expedition, although their vitamin starved bodies were slow to respond. One major problem was the terrible despondency that afflicted all, the conviction of each man that he was certain to die. Several felt that it was not worth the efforts Cook prescribed. But he fought this feeling of desolation. Soon, as some recovered more rapidly than others, he had helpers in his joust against gloom and death. Foremost among them were Lecointe and Amundsen.

BY the time the sun rose in late July there was a noticeable improvement in health, and outdoor work was resumed full blast. After experimental hikes in fur suits of the Nansen model which had been brought from Norway, Cook and Amundsen opened them at the waist to permit ventilation. Then came short sledging trips over the pack.

When summer began the *Belgica* was in the center of an enormous floe about four miles long. Measurements of the ice showed that in most points it was about eight feet thick.

Warm summer weather caused a steady weathering of the floe in which they were locked, but as months passed it showed no signs of breaking up. They still drifted at the mercy of the pack. Anxiety increased, for all knew that it would be next to impossible for the little company to survive another winter.

In January Cook proposed that they cut trenches in the ice from the ship to the edge of the floe, with the idea that the movement of water through them, plus the heat absorption of the water,

might eat far enough into the ice so the floe would crack in two. Had this been tried in the December midsummer it might have been successful, but by January the season was so far along that ice froze on the water during the night when the sun was low, and it took nearly all of the warmer portion of the day to melt it off.

Cook proposed another plan, audacious in its magnitude. Why not cut a canal from the edge of the floe to the ship? They had tried the new explosive, tonite, and it had failed, but with their saws they could cut through a thickness of seven feet. They made borings in several directions, and finally found a route where summer melting had reduced the ice to about five feet in thickness. The distance to the edge of the floe was half a mile, and time was growing short.

The party divided into crews, with everyone from commander to cabin boy ready for work. They started from the edge of the floe and worked toward the ship, sawing two parallel lines through the ice. Every few feet a cross cut was necessary; then the loose block was towed to the edge of the floe and set adrift.

By the first of February they were within a hundred feet of the *Belgica,* after sawing a total distance of more than a mile and one half. Here they encountered ice so hard that their saws made little impression. While trying to devise a new plan, a breeze sprang up which separated a crevasse on one side of the canal, and the released ice drifted enough to block their path of escape. Worse was the new pressure to which the *Belgica* was now subjected. Already weakened, the little vessel was in danger of being crushed at any moment. For two weeks they worked frantically, although hope was nearly gone. But on the morning of February 14th the wind changed direction. Their canal reopened, and in so doing split the last hundred feet. The *Belgica* steamed out to safety.

Dr. Cook was the outstanding hero of the expedition. When they reached Europe he was heaped with honors and given the highest recognition a grateful monarch could bestow. On bended knee he was knighted by Leopold II, King of the Belgians.

COOK returned to his medical practice in New York, but his vision could not long be confined to the narrow limits of Manhattan. Peary had sailed north in 1898, and in 1901 had not been heard from for two years. A relief expedition was organized by the potent Peary Arctic Club, and Dr. Cook went along as physician, without pay. He refused an offer from Peary to stay north over the winter, and returned with the other members of the relief expedition.

Once more he settled to the humdrum of city life, but again his thoughts ranged far afield. This time he thought of Mt. McKinley, the untouched giant that towers in grandeur over the wild Alaska Range. Years earlier a young West Pointer, Lieutenant Joseph B. Herron, had surveyed a portion of the range and discovered Simpson Pass. Other exploratory work had been done through parts of the range, but much of the territory around McKinley had never been trod by human foot.

They established their camp about fifty miles from Simpson Pass on the Skentna river, after ascending the Susitna into the Yentna, and thence up the Skentna. Here they were joined by their pack train, and moved camp to the Kichatna. From here they began their circuitous approach to McKinley.

They ascended the Kichatna and followed the trail which Lieutenant Herron had blazed through Simpson Pass. Before them lay ten thousand square miles of unexplored territory, a veritable hunters' paradise. Their course was to the northeast, and their path led over some

of the most difficult territory imaginable. They forded rivers that were overflowing with summer loads of melted snow, tramped through swamps where water was knee deep.

Game and berries supplemented their diet. Mosquitoes and flies made life a torment. After a tortuous journey of five hundred miles they at last caught their first glimpse of McKinley.

The first assault began from the southwest, and they reached an altitude of 8,300 feet before they were stopped by cliffs half a mile high. Then they followed a circuitous path until they reached a point where they could approach the peak from the northwest. This time they reached an altitude of more than eleven thousand feet before further progress was impossible.

They retreated to their base camp and resumed their circuitous path. At last, many miles northeast of the mountain, they found a new pass through the Alaska Range and succeeded in reaching the headwaters of the Chulitna. Horses were turned loose to shift for themselves. They made rafts and began a desperate descent of the Chulitna, stopping to make a brief reconnaisance of two glaciers. These Cook named Fidele and Ruth in honor of his wife and daughter. Ruth Glacier still bears that name, but the other is called Eldridge today.

They returned to their rafts and drifted downstream into the Susitna. Near the mouth they secured an old dory which took them to Cook Inlet. They had succeeded in completely encircling the McKinley Group, had laid the basis for further assaults on McKinley itself, and secured important geographic information which is incorporated in all maps of the region.

In 1906 he made another attempt, this time with a party of ten men. They had a motor boat for river work, and elaborate equipment for map making and general exploration. They approached Mt. McKinley from the south, and spent months in careful exploration. Several attempts at finding a route to the summit failed, and with summer nearly over they decided it was hopeless for that year. Accordingly the party scattered to gather game specimens and do last minute work of exploration. They felt that they had had a good summer, for nearly three thousand square miles of territory had been explored.

Accompanied by a packer, Barrille, and a miner named Dokkin, Cook pushed the launch upstream to a camp within three or four miles of Ruth Glacier. Dokkin prepared to winter here, while Cook and Barrille pushed on up Ruth Glacier. It is from this point that Cook's story has been disputed.

By his account they still had no intention of reaching the summit, intending, instead, to complete reconnaisance and return. With lightweight sleeping bags, silk tent and camping equipment, and about twenty pounds of concentrated food per man. they began ascending Ruth Glacier. September was one-third gone, and they hoped from an altitude of about twelve thousand feet to plan a path to the summit.

In three days they pushed north thirty-five miles and camped in a snow hut on the northeast ridge. From here it was a steep ascent toward the peak.

On the morning of September 12th they attacked this ridge, a hogback with sharp falls of several thousand feet on either side. In some places the slope was as much as sixty degrees, but the ice was firm and the steps they cut with their ice axes were secure. They camped that night in a ditch they dug in the icy side of the mountain. Next day they passed from the steep ridge into the gentle slopes of the median glacier. From here on the ascent was easy, except for the effects of higher altitude, which are more pronounced in northern latitudes than in more southerly mountains. On September 16th they reached the summit of the south, and higher, peak, 20,300 feet

Admiral Peary

above sea level. They did not ascend the north peak, three or four miles away.

IT is not the purpose of this account to pass judgment on Cook's disputed claims. His ascent of Mt. McKinley was challenged in 1909 as part of the Polar controversy, and Barrille sold Cook's enemies an affidavit stating that they had not reached the summit. In 1910 a group of miners known as the Lloyd party made the ascent, leaving a flagpole on the north peak. They disputed Cook's success, but their description of the path to the summit coincided with the doctor's.

In 1910 Herschell Parker and Belmore Browne failed in an attempt, and brought back a photograph taken miles away from McKinley—a photo that they called Cook's Fake Mountain Top, stating that it was a duplicate of the summit photo he had published. At that time they claimed that his route to the summit was impossible. In 1912 they tried again, and this time were defeated by a blizzard when very close to success.

Archdeacon Hudson Stuck said he reached the summit of the south peak in 1913, and reported seeing the flagpole on the north peak left by the Lloyd party in 1910. In 1932 Harry Liek climbed both peaks.

Cook's success is denied by all of the parties which followed him, but the reasons given have little bearing on his story. One, for example, is because the south side of the mountain is impassable, but Cook climbed from the north-

east. Another is that Cook could not have crossed Muldrow Glacier without snowshoes, but he approached the northeast end of the ridge from the south and did not cross that glacier. The significant facts filtering from the controversy are these:

1. All parties followed the route up the northeast ridge first described by Cook.

2. All parties agree in description of the geographical features from the northeast ridge to the summit.

3. The photograph of "Cook's Fake Mountain Top" is not a duplicate of Cook's summit photo. It is a photograph retouched. In it is a man shown standing in snow halfway to his knees, but there are no footprints leading to his position.

4. The Explorer's Club committee which in 1909 reported that Cook had failed to supply proof of his climb, met before any other ascents of the mountain were made.

5. Cook's success was not challenged until the Polar controversy.

Geographical authorities are divided today in their opinion of Cook's claim to Mt. McKinley.

IN the spring of 1907 Dr. Cook and John R. Bradley laid plans for an expedition to Greenland. Bradley wanted to hunt, and Cook dreamed of an attempt at the Pole. Cook supervised outfitting their converted Gloucester schooner, and in return was to receive full cooperation from Bradley if he found conditions in Greenland to his liking. In addition to the regular equipment for a summer cruise, Cook took along a liberal supply of pemmican and other foods needed for a sledging expedition, seasoned hickory for sledge construction, and all necessary equipment.

The party sailed early in July with little advance publicity. The trip north was uneventful, with stops along the coast of Greenland to hunt and trade with natives.

At Annoatok, the most northerly settlement in the world, they found a number of Eskimo families. Game was plentiful, and Cook decided to stay over for an attempt at the Pole the following spring. With him remained Rudolphe Francke, a reliable, easy-going German who now lives in New York.

Bradley's prowess with a rifle helped the Eskimos in their fall hunt for a winter food supply, and with characteristic generosity he unloaded all surplus stores from the schooner to augment Cook's personal supply. Then he sailed south, and the two lone white men prepared for winter.

They built their home from packing cases blanketed with turf. The cases opened on the inside, so that every wall was a cupboard. A large stove provided heat, and they settled down to a busy winter. They spent considerable time hunting with the Eskimos, and in return the Eskimo women made them outfits of fur, complete from birdskin shirts and hareskin stocking to sealskin boots, bearskin pants, and blue fox coats.

During the long night they worked on the sledges, bending hickory runners to shape, sheathing them with strips of iron riveted in place, and constructing all sledges to a uniform design so that parts would be interchangeable. Joints were lashed together with sealskin to give flexibility, but dog harnesses were made from cloth rather than skin, so that they would not be eaten when short rations became the rule. The outfits were slightly modified from the design developed by Cook and Amundsen in 1898, and the completed sledges weighed fifty-two pounds.

When the sun rose in February, all was ready. They set out across the waters of Smith Sound, an expedition of eleven sledges drawn by more than one hundred dogs.

Soon after reaching Ellesmere Island

they ran into trouble, for the ground was bare and they found no signs of game. Since they had planned to live largely on the country during the journey to land's end, the expedition was seriously threatened. To protect his base camp in case he should be forced to return, Dr. Cook sent Francke back to Annoatok.

The reduced party pushed on up Flagler bay and finally found a trail where there was enough snow for sledging. Then began the journey to Bay Fiord, across the high reaches of Ellesmere Island.

That journey must have been a triumph of adventuring. They explored a new pass, ascending nearly vertical cliffs, twisting their way around and over boulders and ridges, winding through narrow valleys. It got so cold that several dogs froze to death. Temperatures at night dropped to -78°, to -79°, and on one bitter night the alcohol plummeted to -83°. Musk oxen and hare were plentiful, and there was no limit to the amount of food for dog or man. Caches of milk, pemmican, biscuit, tea, and fuel were left every fifty miles to provide a safe line of retreat. The drive up Eureka and Nansen Sounds to Svartevoeg was a joyous sprint that put the entire party in fine fettle for the ordeal to come.

This western route, while longer than a drive straight north, was a deliberate part of Cook's plan. Sverdrup had discovered the rich game lands through which much of his route led, and the many futile efforts of Peary had demonstrated that the further west one went from Greenland, the better would be the ice conditions encountered. Moreover, the four hundred mile overland trip gave Cook an opportunity to select the most effective combination of men and dogs for the crucial journey over sea ice, and assured a well fed, well conditioned party.

Svartevoeg is the northernmost point of Axel Heiberg Land, discovered and mapped by Sverdrup in 1900 but rechristened Cape Thomas Hubbard by Peary in 1906. When Cook reached this point he sent back all but four of the Eskimos, giving them a note for Francke. This was the last the world heard from Cook for more than a year, and it is from Svartevoeg on that his story has been disputed.

By his own account, he set out over the Arctic Ocean on the morning of March 18th, with his loads distributed over four sledges. In three days they covered a little more than sixty miles. Then two of the Eskimos shared a final meal, and turned back for land with empty sledges. Cook was left on the ice with two young natives, Etukishook and Awehala, two heavily loaded sledges, and twenty-six dogs.

The outfit included about a thousand pounds of pemmican, fifty pounds of fresh musk ox flesh to prevent scurvy, and moderate amounts of musk ox tallow, sugar, condensed milk, pea soup powder, tea, coffee, biscuit, and "surprises." They had full navigating equipment, two rifles and ammunition, a canvas boat, ice axes, a camera and films, kerosene, extra clothing, sleeping bags, and miscellaneous camp equipment. They planned to kill dogs as loads lightened, feeding the carcasses to the more efficient workers, thereby reducing the total amount of pemmican needed for dog food.

THE northward march was hardest kind of work. The Arctic Ocean is a topsy turvy jumble of ice. Floes crash together to form great pressure ridges, then separate to leave open leads which freeze over after a time. Progress in any direction alternates easy going over smooth surfaces with the toil of lifting heavy sledges over pressure ridges, cutting paths through heaps of ice, picking perilous crossing over freshly frozen leads.

They passed directly by Peary's Crocker Land—which was reported by Peary in 1906 but which has since proved non-existent—without seeing it. Straddling latitude eighty-five, they observed a new land to the west and named it in honor of John R. Bradley. Farther north they crossed what seemed to be land ice—either a low island or shoal waters in which the pack had frozen to the bottom.

On some days they completed marches that put them more than twenty miles nearer their goal. On others they could not march at all. The air was hazy from many open leads of water, and the low-lying sun played queer tricks with vision. The frozen mists seemed to boil and swirl like great masses of red and gold, the ice reflected and refracted light into all colors of the spectrum, and the broad fields of snow reflected the purple from the sky.

Their ration of a pound of pemmican a day was not enough, and their bodies slowly wasted away. They did not mind the cold, which ranged as low as -50°, but did suffer from the bitter winds, which peeled skin from cheeks and noses.

Each observation for longitude showed that they had drifted slowly to the east, but they constantly corrected their course and plodded slowly toward their goal. There were moments when it seemed that they could never succeed. First to break was Awehla, the more emotional of the two Eskimos.

One morning he voiced the thoughts of all by wailing, "Ah, it is well to die. Never again will we see our loved ones."

Cook talked with him, urged him on. "Just a little further; then we will go back to our homes."

In cheering Awehla, Cook answered the despair that was in his own heart. Stolid Etukishook responded to the same emotional urge, and with a sudden rebound of spirits they went surging to the north.

On April 21, Cook says, they reached the Pole, as nearly as it could be located then or now. After a moment of wild elation, Cook felt the inevitable reaction. They were more than five hundred miles from their food caches, and were already exhausted. Yet their victory was of no value unless they returned to civilization.

Beneath them was a sea of unknown depth. Around them was nothing but icy desolation, no land, no life. He wrote, "We were the only pulsating creatures in a dead world of ice."

He wrote a report and sealed it in a little brass tube together with a tiny silk flag. This he buried in the drifting ice, hoping that by some miracle it would one day be washed ashore where it could be found. There was no way of leaving a permanent record.

Cook spent two days taking observations. Then they began the return march, constantly bound by fog. In a period of several weeks he got just one solar observation. Then, on June 13th, after many days of half rations, with their last morsel of food gone, the weather cleared. He discovered that they had been caught by a southward drift and carried far to the south and west of their cache at Svartevoeg. Between them and Axel Heiberg Land lay fifty miles of mingled ice and open water, and if they succeeded in reaching the shores there were still many miles to travel before reaching their food caches. The only chance seemed to continue southward, hoping to live on game and eventually make contact with a whaler in Lancaster Sound.

A fortunate encounter with a bear gave them food. Then they walked and drifted until the ice broke up so badly that they were forced to land on North Devon.

They crossed to Jones Sound, released their dogs, abandoned one sledge, and cut the other down until it would fit into their canvas boat.

Dr. Cook

THAT is the portion of Cook's story which has been challenged. More than a year later Peary published a report of an interview he said he had had with Cook's Eskimos. In it the boys were quoted as saying that they had not gone far to the north, but had turned south a few miles from Svartevoeg and spent the next three or four months in going south to Jones Sound.

There is no dispute about Cook's adventures after landing on North Devon. Summer was well advanced by this time, yet they suffered a greater agony from the weather than at any time on the journey. Their path across the narrow neck of land led through shallow valleys with icy floors. Sometimes they went through into water shoulder deep, and there was real danger of drowning. The thermometer hovered around the freezing point for days on end, and in the combination of freezing and thawing, with bitter winds, clothing soaked by clinging vapor, they experienced all the torments of freezing.

Their heavily laden canvas boat was a poor craft to face the sudden storms of Jones Sound. Loaded with instruments, sledge, camping equipment, and three husky men, it sank until the waves came within three or four inches of spilling in. Consequently they were forced to keep close to the twisting shoreline, and made slow progress to the east.

One day, having taken a chance by

cutting straight across a deep inlet, they were caught in a severe storm. Separated from land by masses of drifting ice, they took refuge on a berg, lashing themselves and their equipment to holes they cut in the ice.

Here they clung for many hours, soaked by icy brine until their skins cracked and their hands and feet grew numb. They could not eat, had no fresh water. It was twenty-four hours before they made their escape, and in that time they had been driven back as far to the west as they had advanced in the past two weeks.

Once more they headed eastward. For weeks they had had no civilized food, no fuel. They had lived on birds, eggs, and occasional game that came their way. But it did little good to kill a bear or seal; after one gorging night they could carry only a few pounds along with them, and time advanced so rapidly that they did not dare stop the necessary few days to regain their strength through feasting and rest.

Their clothing hung in tatters, and they were all but out of ammunition. Still they paddled to the east. Once a walrus slashed a large hole in the bottom of their fragile boat, and they landed to mend it barely in the nick of time.

They killed birds with rocks and slingshots, and devoured them raw. They camped at night, and sometimes had a fire. Occasionally one of the boys would catch a hare in a noose.

By the end of August they had reached Baffin Bay, but an attempt at further progress south or east meant almost certain death. Their only hope was a return to Cape Sparbo, where they could make a stand against encroaching winter, with some chance of securing game.

In a few short weeks they had to prepare winter quarters and stock them with food. With wood from the sledges they made harpoons and lances, and from a carefully cut seal skin they manufactured a long line. Then they began their retreat.

One day they saw several groups of walruses floating on ice pans far out from shore. The pans were drifting eastward more rapidly than the pack, and there was a projecting cape of ice near which most of them passed.

Concealed in their little boat, they waited behind the cape. They attached one end of their line to the harpoon, passed the other through two holes they had cut in an ice pan several yards in diameter, and tied it in the middle. This gave them a float that would take a lot of punishment. The free end of the line was coiled in their boat.

Several ice pans with large herds were allowed to drift by unmolested. Then came one carrying only three walruses, and the boat darted out from its hiding place. With a savage thrust Etukishook sank the harpoon deep into a fleshy neck. All three of the enormous beasts splashed into the water, and the men dashed their boat onto the abandoned floe.

The line came taut with a snap, and the ice pan began moving rapidly toward shore, towing the larger floe with its human passengers. At first the men believed their prey might accommodate them by delivering its precious carcass for them, but they were soon disillusioned.

The three beasts stuck together, two of them attempting to help their wounded companion. They zigzagged back and forth in an effort to shake off this strange contraption that stung and dragged. Then they turned to the attack.

Cook stationed himself on the edge of the floe with the ice axe in hand, and each of the boys took defensive positions, armed with smooth tipped lances attached to lines. As the three ugly snouts appeared over the edge of the pan, the lances struck home. The walruses turned back, disappeared under water, and fled.

The float pan began to move rapidly

out to sea, and crashed into the floe on which the men were riding. This was a golden opportunity. In a flash Awehla jumped to the float pan, seized the loose line, and tossed it to Dr. Cook. He wrapped it firmly around the ice axe, which he had driven into the floe, and Mr. Walrus now had a terrific load of ice to drag through the water.

For fifteen hours he battled, pitting his ton of bone, muscle, and blubber against the yielding drag of twenty tons of ice. He fought as desperately as a giant rainbow on a fly line, but it was hopeless. The men calmly loafed on their icy carriage, chipping off pieces of ice when they were thirsty, nagging the beast by jerking on the line each time he stopped to rest, pulling in line as the weakening creature rose for air at shorter and shorter intervals. At last the battle proved too much for the walrus, and he was drawn up on the floe.

Here was a bountiful supply of food and fuel. They worked their floe to shore, and in a short time had a fire going. Great chunks of meat were wolfed down while still half raw, and between gulps the men buried enormous pieces cut from the carcass. Rocks were rolled over their cache, and then they slept for hours.

Awehala wakened in time to see a bear walking off with a hundred pound joint that had been left out for their next meal. He called the others, and all went to their cache a short distance away. To their dismay they found that it had been torn open, and nearly all of their meat was gone.

THEIR stomachs were empty when they reached Cape Sparbo, and there was not an ounce of food in their little cockle shell. They found a cave-like opening which could be patched up for winter. Then the Eskimo boys went out and succeeded in snaring small game.

For several days they lived on birds and hare while patching up their cave with rocks and making additional weapons from the wood of their sledges. Arrows were tipped with blades from a pocket knife, and a small hickory bow was strung with seal tendon. These weapons were effective against small game, but useless against the musk oxen which abounded. Yet unless they succeeded in killing several of these creatures there was little chance of their living through the winter. In the musk ox alone they would find the necessary combination of fur, fat for fuel, and good meat for food.

Loaded with all their weapons, they went hunting, and found a herd of more than twenty oxen. At their approach the creatures formed in a circle, massive heads to the outside, and refused to move. Rocks bounced from their heads without effect, and there was no opportunity to use other weapons.

Next they found a small herd of four. A shower of rocks brought a charge, and they dodged in and out among the large boulders until a chance offered to thrust a lance into one of the bulls. It splintered before it could be withdrawn by the light line. Another lance was broken in the same way; then one of the boys succeeded in planting a barbed harpoon in the side of a large bull. The other end was attached to a large rock, and while the maddened creature fought this drag, a lance pierced his heart.

Although they had a kill to their credit, they hesitated to risk their harpoon further. They attempted to lasso the oxen, and tried to entangle their feet in snares. Both stratagems failed. At last, after many battles, they developed a technique that combined effectiveness with reasonable safety.

A slip noose was made in the center of a long line, and while the two Eskimos stretched it in front of an ox, Dr.

Cook drew an attack with a shower of rocks. As the beast lowered his head to charge, the noose was raised by the Eskimos until it looped over his horns. Then the loose ends were tied to rocks, slack was taken up when possible, and in a short time the doctor could approach from the rear and lance the creature through the heart.

By the time winter descended in earnest they had plenty of meat cached under rocks large enough to turn back even the powerful polar bear. With dry moss as wicks, and musk ox fat for fuel, they had lamps for heating and cooking. Sleeping shelves, padded with warm musk ox fur, were far enough from the floor to be comfortable. For food they had musk ox, hare, and walrus meat, and the fat and marrow from the oxen were eaten all winter long as eagerly as candy.

During the long night there was little to occupy their time. For several months they had the companionship of a blue Arctic rat until the little creature went into its long winter sleep. Dr. Cook wrote the manuscript of his "My Attainment of the Pole," putting over one hundred thousand words of fine writing into three small note books. He wrote between the lines of notes taken on the polar trip, and even covered paper wrappings of film with microscopic writing.

Even so, inactivity played heavily on their spirits, and they were delighted when light skies to the south at noon indicated the coming of spring. The hickory that had been used as weapons was returned to service on the sledge, and new lashings of seal and musk ox tendons were added for additional strength. They made harnesses for themselves from strips of skin, loaded the sledge with dried musk ox meat and strips of tallow, and packed their precious instruments and camp equipment. On February 18th, just one day less than a year from their start, they began the long walk to Greenland. They found it impossible to carry enough food to last more than a small fraction of the way.

It took eight days to march to Cape Tennyson over easy ice that could have been covered easily in two days with dogs. Their food was exhausted within a month, and they were still a hundred miles from Cape Sabine. With one of the four cartridges Dr. Cook had secreted the summer before, Awehala shot a bear. This was the first game they had seen since leaving their winter home, and once more they had food. They gorged, slept, and gorged again. Then they pushed on to the north.

When they reached Cape Sabine their larder was once more empty, but here they found an old seal carcass which had been cached a year earlier by Panikpa, father of Etukishook. They ate the putrescent meat with relish, loaded their sledge with more, and marched out over Smith Sound. Annoatok was in sight, but there was a wide expanse of open water in between. That long detour to the north, with food and comfort in sight, must have been the most heartbreaking experience of all.

They were as thin as it is possible for men to be. Their only food was the ripe seal meat, and it was entirely consumed before they circled their way around the open water and approached Annoatok from the north. So weak that they had to climb on hands and knees, they reached the top of a berg only a mile from home. Natives rushed out to meet them, and they were safe.

But Cook's troubles had only begun. He found that his house had been confiscated by Peary's orders under the guise of "protecting" his stores, and that his supplies were being used by two members of Peary's crew and by a guest, Harry Whitney, a young sportsman who had spent the winter hunting in Greenland. This episode led to much bitterness later. At first, Cook was accused of stealing Peary's supplies, but Peary's

press agent finally admitted the reverse, justifying it on the ground that Peary was a naval officer who acted within his rights in taking over abandoned stores.

At the time Cook arrived in Annoatok, Peary and his crew were far to the north on the engineer's last Polar effort. They had left a reserve supply at Etah, a few miles south of Annoatok, and had driven the *Roosevelt* through Robeson Channel to the shores of the Arctic Ocean at Cape Sheridan.

Cook realized that a meeting with Peary at this spot would not be cordial, and that his rival would scarcely offer him passage back to the United States. Also, he wanted to beat Peary home with his own announcement of discovery, for he believed that Peary, from his starting point only four hundred and thirteen geographical (four hundred and seventy-five statute) miles from the Pole, might well have been successful.

He rested a few days, then loaded a sledge with supplies and started south. Ahead lay seven hundred miles of difficult travel, over glaciers, across sea ice that became more dangerous with every passing day. There was a real hazard that he might lose his sledge, and his life was not altogether safe. Accordingly he left his instruments with Whitney—and, according to his account, much of his original data. On his person he carried the three little notebooks packed with his winter's writing, and a few miscellaneous observation sheets.

Eventually he reached South Greenland, and late in the summer got passage to Copenhagen. On September 1st the steamer paused at Lerwick, in the Shetland Islands, for Cook to send out messages, and on September 4th they reached the Danish capital. Here he was heaped with honors, with seeds of doubt being spread by Peary followers. On September 6th Peary's discovery announcement came by wireless from Indian Harbor, and two days later came his first denunciation of Cook.

THE Cook-Peary controversy is a sad chapter of American history. Peary had been built up by careful publicity until many believed that only he could have succeeded, but his vitriolic manner brought much public censure.

Regardless of the merits of Dr. Cook's Polar claim, we know now that most of the charges aimed at him by Peary were groundless. The myth that surrounded Peary at that time has been largely torn down by the work of later explorers who have proved that he was wrong in many of his claims. For example, his two "crossings" of Greenland actually took him little further than midway across the continent; his Peary Channel, Crocker Land, and Independence Bay are figments of the imagination; and the much publicized survey work on the north coast of Ellesmere Island is ignored by modern map makers.

At that time, however, Peary reigned in the American eye as the greatest of all explorers. He had the services of a remarkably efficient publicity agent, and it seems almost certain that he allowed his wish to father the thought in regard to Dr. Cook just as certainly as he did in regard to geographic attainments.

Regularly, every two weeks, with the relentless force of a battering ram, new charges were hurled at Cook. It made no difference to the newspaper public that they were often self-contradictory, for the public is not disposed to go into technical details.

Of them all, the only one that has any significance is the alleged statement of Cook's Eskimos that they went only two days north of Svartevoeg. If this is true, then Cook's claim is worthless. However, that statement is directly contrary to the statement Peary had released two weeks earlier, and is a flat contradiction of what the Eskimos told Knud Rasmussen and Captain Schonbye, which was given wide European publication but received little attention

in the American press. Moreover, it has since been published in highly contradictory forms by members of Peary's party, so that if the interview took place, the Eskimos are on record as stating that they were in three places, going in three different directions at the same time.

The important part of Cook's claim is what subsequent exploration has revealed about his story. Some of his caches between Annoatok and Svartevoeg have been found by Donald MacMillan and Fitzhugh Green. His observation that Schei Island is, in fact, a peninsula, was verified in 1932 by Corporal Stallworth of the Canadian Arctic Police Patrols. His failure to see Crocker Land is vindicated by the fact that Crocker Land does not exist. His report of Bradley Land is probably correct, for the soundings of Stefansson and Peary, the flight of birds, the recent discovery of birds at the Pole by the Russian expedition, a study of tides by R. A. Harris of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the animal tracks observed near Bradley Land by Peary and by the Amundsen expedition, and the mirages seen by MacMillan, Green, and Peary, all point to its existence.

Finally, at a time when conditions at the Pole were unknown, Cook gave the world its first description of them and that description has been born out by the observations of fifty men who have since seen it.

It would seem, therefore, that there is more than a little merit in the claim of Dr. Cook to have been the winner of the three hundred year race for the Pole.

SINCE the controversy, Cook's life has not been too happy. He gained much ground in the first few years after his return to the United States, but every effort at an official investigation was blocked. In 1915 his expedition to Mt. Everest was balked by the World War. One of his companions, Dr. Frank P. Thompson of Chicago, found that his American variety of English impressed British authorities in India as being tinged with German, and the party had difficulty in evading the suspicion that they were German spies.

The saddest chapter in Cook's life is the prison sentence for using the mails to defraud. Although the government's own witnesses testified that the funds of his company were in perfect condition, that Cook was the largest single investor, and that there was no evidence of embezzlement, other government witnesses proclaimed that the lands under lease were worthless. After he was convicted and the company liquidated, these very lands produced a wealth in gas and oil far beyond his wildest dreams, but that helped neither the doctor nor the investors.

It seems that he has been constantly dogged by vindication that comes too late. Today the world's most authoritative Atlas, *Stieler's* of Berlin, has his name written as discoverer of the North Pole. Distinguished and impartial authorities, who scoff at Peary's claims, consider Cook's success highly probable. His claims have been publicly championed in recent years by such distinguished explorers and authorities as Major Anthony Fiala and Roald Amundsen.

But his recent appeal for an official investigation has been side-tracked, and many years may elapse before his story is at last examined by a scientific jury. In the meantime, he is aging rapidly, and it may not be long before he makes his last, irrevocable discovery.

There is so much grandeur in his positive and unchallenged achievements, so much tragedy in the later pattern of his life, that it would be ghastly if the final vindication of his Arctic work, which now seems more than possible, should come too late to bring him a last brief hour of happiness.

As accurately as pouncing hawk's claws, the rope dropped over his body.

THE REDHEAD *from* TULLUCO

Fourth part of five

By GORDON YOUNG

WHEN Red Clark, late of Tulluco, rode into Nelplaid to take over the Lazy Z ranch, he thought it looked like a peaceful town. But five minutes after he arrived he changed his mind. In that space of time he saw Sam Clayton, a leading rancher, shot down from ambush, and because Sam's daughter seemed in danger of the same fate, Red took a hand in the game. When the smoke cleared four men lay sprawled in the dusty street, and Red was on the way to become a Nelplaid legend—because he had escaped untouched!

Judge Trowbridge of Nelplaid had hired Red on the strength of his being the son of one of the West's best lawmen. After sizing up the situation he knew he would have to earn his pay.

For the owner of the Lazy Z, who had inherited it sight unseen, took no active supervision of the ranch and expected Red to whip it into shape virtually alone. Which would be bad enough un-

der normal conditions and in the present case impossible—cattle were disappearing without trace. And from indications the law was on the enemy's side.

Red tracked some stolen cattle to the ranch of Frank Knox, a neighboring cowman, confronted him with the evidence and took him back to town to the sheriff—and within a few hours he was free on bail, and laughing at him!

"I've brought in my last rustler alive," Red told them grimly. "The next one comes in belly-down, under a diamond hitch!"

And suddenly Red's mysterious boss arrived—and all his battle plans were thrown into confusion. For J. C. Alvord was a woman!

Red convinced her that it was a case of fight or perish, and the events of the next few days proved him right. Almost within the boundaries of the Lazy Z, he was attacked by an armed band, and was saved only through the intervention of one Kilco, an outlaw, who drove them off.

Red was unhurt, but Kilco was badly wounded, and Red brought him to the Lazy Z for care. Here arose another complication. For Kilco had to have a doctor—and how could a doctor be brought to the ranch without tipping off the sheriff?

As it happened, Red was able, through the aid of Kate Clayton, Sam's daughter, to find a young medico who would treat Kilco without telling the law. Doctor Mills, he was, a newcomer in town. He had been treating Kate's father, and, learning that Kate was in love with the outlaw, agreed to help.

Hardly had the doctor left the ranch, when Red and his new boss could see the hand of unseen enemies shaping their ruin. For, looking out down the trail, Red saw men riding their way. Two Wells Fargo agents and the marshal—out to capture Kilco dead or alive!

They hid the outlaw behind some curtains in the bunkhouse, and the little group steeled themselves to carry on a desperate bluff to save the man who had saved Red's life.

RED stepped between Jane and the marshal. Dough and flour was on his face, on his clothes, in his hair; but somehow he did not look ridiculous. He knew that Kilco was listening, that Kilco was fiercely suspicious even yet, and that if anything leaked out about his having met the marshal and talked with him there in town, Kilco would never believe that he had not been betrayed.

Red spoke defiantly: "Kilco was hurt helpin' me in a fight and I hid him. I hid 'im good, too. I told her I did. I won't tell you where he is and you can't make me! Your job is to ride around and find him if you can, but you don't need to try to scare her. For two reasons. One is, she won't scare. And the other is, she ain't ever been much more'n three miles from this ranch, so how can she know where I carried Kilco off to?"

"And brought a doctor!" said the marshal sternly.

"You're right I did! And I bet you the doctor wouldn't tell you where I brought 'im to, neither!"

"He was seen coming down from this way with that boy Bobby."

"And Bobby will tell you when he rides in that I brought the doctor right here to this house, and I roused Bobby up to show the doctor the way to the Springs. You all just set down and wait for supper, and when the kids ride in, you ask 'em!" Then Red grinned. "Though this shypoke of a blear-eyed cook'll have to pull some dough outa my hair to make up enough biscuits to feed comp'ny!"

"I think," said the marshal calmly, "as how we'll accept the invitation."

"That'll just be fine. I'll get out my comp'ny manners and stop tellin' this cook some truths about himself. Only you'll have to take care of your horses

if you want 'em fed. I got to scrape myself rid of where I been touched by this cook."

The marshal gazed at Red as if somehow disappointed in him. "We'll put up our horses." The three of them went out, got into their saddles, rode over to the stable.

As soon as they were out of hearing, the cook chortled and cut capers.

Jane protested, "Red, you shouldn't have asked them to stay!"

"If I hadn't, they'd suspicioned something." Red pulled the blanket aside. "This cook is lots smarter'n he looks. We had to make that noise on account of bein' flustered and breathin' hard. Kilco, now will you take them pills so you can be quiet easy?"

Kilco's face was wet with cold sweat and he looked as if trying not to cry. He gasped soundlessly and nodded.

Cook brought water and Jane fished down deep inside of her waist for the bottle of pills. She rolled three out on her palm. Red took them from her hand, the cup of water from the cook. Kilco opened his mouth wide and Red put the pills back on his tongue, then put an arm under Kilco's head and raised it a little, holding the cup to his mouth.

IT grew dark and Bobby and Pete had not come. The cook, still acting surly, was ready to put supper on the table. Red had washed up, changed his shirt, and stood near the front door as if wishing to join in the conversation, but the marshal talked a little to Jane and ignored Red. The Wells-Fargo men squatted outside and mumbled to each other, one as if he had a bad cold.

Jane was nervous, even jumpy, but she tightened her muscles and did not show any emotion. It was hard for her not to look toward the blankets that hung down before her bunk.

The marshal frowned. "Red, you are playing with fire. I thought it mighty fine the way you used your guns there in town. But some day you are liable to misuse them, and be an outlaw yourself." He went on staring at Red for a while, then looked at his watch and began pretending that Red wasn't anywhere around by talking of other things to Jane. "I rode over today to attend Sam Clayton's funeral. . . "

The kids came. They could see through the lighted doorway that company was in the house and rode up, piled off and came in, curious as pups. The marshal faced about solemnly, but before he spoke, Red whipped out:

"Bobby, you was seen ridin' with that doctor—"

"You keep still!" said the marshal.

"—and you know I had took that doctor to Kilco and then—"

"Red!" The marshal's voice was stern.

Red went on as if he didn't hear "—I had you show him the way to Manning Springs from here. So," Red added earnestly, "if now you know where I've got Kilco hid, why you just up and say so to the marshal here! An' I mean it!"

The two kids looked about the room. The lamplight carried to the bunk Kilco had been on, but they could see that he was not there. They looked at Jane and her face was set anxiously. They looked over to where the cook held a long fork and had paused in dishing up steaks. The cook waggled his fork and they understood they were to keep their mouths shut. They looked at the marshal.

Pete shook his head, and Bobby said, "Cross my heart, I don't know!" He was so mystified that the marshal believed him.

The marshal was not in a good humor. He couldn't put his fingers on anything definite but he sensed that Red was fooling him. He eyed Red sternly and said nothing.

The boys put up their horses, washed up, and came into supper where the others were already eating. The Wells-Fargo men ate heartily and said that

the cook was as good a cook as he was fighter. Jane wasn't hungry but dabbed at her food as if eating. The marshal didn't have much of an appetite either, but Red did. He explained:

"I'm so afraid of rat poison when I eat alone, I don't get a good meal only when we have comp'ny, which is why I hope you all come often."

The two kids ate solemnly with their eyes on their plates, not saying a word.

After they had eaten the marshal thanked Jane for the supper and said that he would be riding. Red sent the kids to saddle up, and when they came with the horses, the marshal turned to Red:

"You had better think over what you are doing."

Red told him in a low voice, "And if Sam Clayton was my friend for thirty years, I would put in some time thinkin' about why he was killed!"

"Kilco's men killed him!"

"It was men Kilco had quarreled with that killed him!"

"Do you know why Sam was killed?"

"I think I do. Only you won't think so, I bet."

"Just how do you mean?"

"Come over here and I'll tell you."

They walked off some fifty yards, and the marshal stood tall and silent, listening to Red's suspicion that Sam Clayton had been killed at the instigation of his son and Dave Gridger.

He asked, cold and low-voiced, "Red, will you tell me something straight and true?"

"If I tell you at all, it'll be true."

"Do you believe what you've just said, or is it something you have made up to take my mind off Kilco?"

"I tell you solemn, Dave Gridger knowed that day what them men was up to while they waited for Mr. Clayton to come out of the store. Then I've told you how Bill Clayton set there outside the house with his father dyin' and lied about how he'd tried to get him not to be moved from town. And he wanted me to work for him, knowin' I'd do my damnedest to kill off his *friends*. You just add things up and see if it don't look like I say."

The marshal studied some more. "This is mighty confidential."

"Yes'r."

"I heard just the other day that Bill and Mell Barber had been seen together down near Poicoma. An officer hears lots of things that ain't so. I just put that down as one of 'em. Now you've made me wonder. If that is true, then you have guessed right."

"Who told you?"

"Dr. Mills sent up word that a man who knows Bill and Mell both had told him they were together outside of town at a drinkin' place.

"But now, Red," he went on calmly, "I'm going to catch this Kilco. I'll get him because I'm not goin' to quit until I do. And then I may arrest you for helpin' him. Most likely I will, because these Wells-Fargo boys are mad about how you have acted, and they will tell folks how you made a monkey out of me and the law. So that is understood between us."

Red stuck out his hand. "I like for a man allus to do what he thinks is right."

When the marshal and his men rode off, Jane sank weakly to a stool and for a minute looked as if about to cry, her nerves were that jangled. Then she began to laugh. The kids' eyes popped out when the cook told them to peek behind the blankets.

Red said, "Now we will all pitch in and help this onery cook wash his dishes. He is all wore out from his play-actin', and he sure done it good. Me and him are goin' to stand watches so Miss Jane here can sleep. She is goin' to have to sleep in my bunk. We can't risk movin' Kilco back."

Jane smiled nervously. "It all seems so trivial now—privacy and such things as only a few days ago seemed *so* impor-

tant. For instance, I know that it is shameless, but I think that I am even in love with four men!"

She looked from one to the other, and they all felt greatly pleased and a little embarrassed.

THE following afternoon Kate came to the Lazy Z ranch, not by the way of the Springs, but over the hills and into the valley, following shorter trails that were well worn because rustlers had used them.

Red and the kids found her by Kilco's bunk when they came in. It was just about dark and she said that she had to get back, for she had promised the servants that she would be home for supper.

Red rolled a cigarette. "You can't go alone."

"I came alone."

"Don't care. A woman has no business traipsin' around alone at night. So don't argy. You're goin' to have comp'ny."

"Let me go!" said Bobby.

"Me too, Red!" Pete urged.

Red flung out a floppy hand. "You kids go saddle up."

They went with peg-heeled scamper.

"Come on out, you," said Red and took the cook by the neck. "We gotta talk."

Outdoors he set the cook on a log by the woodpile, sat down beside him.

"What you want, Red?"

"To get you outa the way, so they can say good-by—nice. Ain't you ever been in love?"

Jane came out into the shadows beside the house and by way of pretending to have something to do started to pump a cup of water. Red got up and worked the pump for her. She stood and drank a little. She, too, was keeping out of the way.

"I like Miss Clayton." Jane somehow conveyed that she was a little surprised, as if ordinarily she did not like women.

"Me, too. But lots of people don't. So I hear tell. They think she is stuck up."

"I fail to see how they can think that. She kissed this dowdy old maid Jane Alvord as soon as we met!"

"You," said Red slowly, looking straight at her though it was dim, "ain't old-maidish any more. And if she'd been takin' good care of somebody you like as well as she likes him, you'd kiss her, too. I bet you'd purt-near kiss this old cook, even!"

"Red, you are an awful person!"

"No I ain't. I'm all right. If I wasn't you wouldn't have me as your range boss."

"But do you really think she may be safe in riding home at night?"

"If I didnt, I'd go myself."

A few minutes later Kate rode off with Pete on one side and Bobby on the other. Red, smoking a cigarette on a stump, could hear the hoofs vibrating muffled echoes in the night stillness.

THE cook roused Red at four o'clock. Cook got breakfast noiselessly so Jane could sleep on. The kids were not back yet. Red ate thoughtfully and figured. Three hours to go, three hours to come, and a couple more at most in case they got lost. They ought to be home.

There was much riding to do that day, particularly if he had to do it alone; so Red went off, but he cut the day short in mid-afternoon.

Jane asked, "Have you seen the boys?"

Red said, "Oh they piled off somers and went to sleep. I know kids."

Then he changed horses, took his black, and started off along the trail. The tracks were easy to follow. He rode down through the valley, climbed into the barrens, and there among the scrub oaks along a rutty trail he found them. They had been filled full of holes, their guns stolen, their horses taken.

Red got down in the lengthened after-

noon shadows and bent over Bobby, who lay on his side with a cheek in the dust as if asleep. His up-turned nose had something impudent even yet in its look. Pete lay sprawled on his back, eyes partly open. His face seemed to retain the defiant look with which he must have faced the killers.

"You poor damned kids." Red mumbled with a sound as if praying, and looked hazily at the ground, trying to think.

Had they been killed coming or going? Coming home, he thought, for who would shoot them down before a woman? And as the question formed itself, the answer slid right along with it: "Mell Barber would've."

He stood up and walked about as if looking for something lost in the dust, noting the marks, and wished for old Mr. Backman's eyes and wisdom. His stomach felt a little sick. There had been four or five horsemen and they had met the party, the boys and Kate. Red found where the horses had stood, trampling the ground, while they waited; and the bootprints of men and the cigarette butts.

He went on over the crest of the hill and stared out across the broken country that was Clayton range. The men had taken Kate and gone somewhere out there. It was too near sundown for him to follow the trail for any distance.

He had loved those boys, and he was about as near to loving Kate Clayton as a man could.

Red squatted down, anger swirling about in his head. "They was waitin' for her," he guessed. "Knowed that she'd come."

He squinted grimly at the evening haze that was gathering in the distance and asked himself, "Bill Clayton?" and left the question hanging up, unanswered. He said, "Knox?" and shook his head. As rotten mean as Knox was, why would he murder these boys? From somewhere deep inside of him a silent voice spoke up, "Because they knowed him?" Red brushed absently at a swarm of gnats. There had been four or five men in the party, all mean enough to hurt a woman. Up again jumped the name, "Mell Barber." Then Bill Clayton's name. The silent voice, just as if it were another person speaking, suggested, "Bill Clayton killed his father to get half the ranch. Wouldn't he kill Kate to get it all?"

NIGHT came, and Red squatted solemnly with a dead cigarette in his fingers, thinking. The boys had to be packed back to the ranch. That would mean tearing Jane's heart to pieces. She loved the kids. And the old cook loved them too.

Red stood up. His leg bones ached. Twilight had gone, and the stars were flittering in the clear blue-black sky. It was not light enough to see clearly. The very night silence had weight, and from far off was the soft breath of wind on the trees. Red swore softly, again with the sound of praying.

It was then that he saw a blob of shadow move along a low round hill below him. His eyes had the range-trained keenness. He could not quite see any outline, but he knew it was a horse, and his straining ears heard the clink of iron shoe on flinty pebbles. Then another shadow appeared.

Two horsemen, riding in the darkness. Were they going to come up the trail where he was? They were not. They were angling south, and when they reached the top of the low round hill they trotted as if pushing on purposefully.

Red did not know this country at all, but he knew that they were not heading toward the Clayton ranchhouse. He guessed right off that they were Clayton cowboys, scouring the hills for some trace of Kate. At least he knew that cowboys on any ranch where he had ever

worked would be scouring the country, day and night; and he was so sure that these were friendly persons that he ran to his horse, rode at a gallop out through the scrub, and hailed them.

The shadow blots that were riders reined up. One called in a thin scream, strangely, anxious, "Who are you?"

"Red Clark of the Lazy Z!"

Two red spurts whipped through the starilght; then another, and others, and rifle echoes pounded the hills.

"That," Red told himself fiercely, "is all I need to know!"

He knew that shooting from a running horse was foolish, but he dropped the reins on the Devil's neck and rode on, firing at a gallop.

One of the horsemen plunged forward, running away, and faintly his shrill voice reached Red's ears: "Come on, Knox!" Then the second rider, who would be Knox, disappeared over the hill.

Red threw up his rifle, jiggled the barrel back into the scabbard, pressed it home, then urged his horse at a gallop down the rough slope.

When he reached low ground, Red did not start up the low hill before him. He turned, circling it. The riders had been heading south when they went over the hill, and Red circled south, knowing that he could make faster time the long way round and not tire his horse so much.

He laid his spurs almost gently on the black lean flanks and the powerful horse buckled its body with lunging bound; the reins swung lax, for Red trusted the Devil's eyes and slim feet. He lay low along the flying mane to balance his weight and ease air pressure.

Red knew that if he could get those fellows out into open country he could ride them down. The Dunham black breed were sure-footed and tireless. The horse sprang with nice footing over small boulders, cleared hummocks, then, with a bound that made Red feel the muscles tense in powerful effort, went across the crumbling banks of a deep arroyo as if flying. The hoofs struck gravel, beat with the pawing rapidity of drumsticks, holding their own in the rubble until they got an instant's footing, then leaped on.

"Good boy!" said Red, stroking the sleek black neck. A moment later, he touched the flanks with blunted rowels, and the Devil swept around the foot of the hill. And there, within a hundred yards or so, were the two men, looking back over their shoulders, expecting the pursuing horseman to come down over the hill. By rounding it, Red had angled in almost upon them before they realized that the flying hoofs were not drumming softly on account of distance but because the horse was running over hard grassy sand.

Both, with rifles in readiness, fired, but with no better luck than men bobbing in saddles usually have. Red had been in too many chases to waste bullets at long range; but he drew a revolver, shot once or twice just to show what he meant.

The man in the lead had the better horse and was spurring hard with rifle up-thrown to balance himself; and the other falling farther behind, with Red's bullets singing about his ears, began to yell, "Knox! Knox!" It was a cry for help. He was pleading for Knox to pull up so that they could make a stand together. At that, Red whipped up the revolver, let go in Knox's general direction, and Knox leaned low and spurred harder.

The fellow in the rear had dropped his rifle and was laboring his horse, his face turned backward. The black Devil was coming up rapidly. The fellow suddenly jerked his horse aside as if to pull down and surrender so as not to be shot out of the saddle. The frantic pull threw the running horse off balance, and it stumbled, fell as if horse and rider had been splattered on the ground.

Red straightened and, as he flashed by, fired twice and did not look back.

His face was set toward the flying shadow ahead. It was Knox that he wanted.

Twice Knox turned in the saddle for snap shots and missed. It was too late now for Knox to pull down, pile out of the saddle, stand broadside to his horse and aim over the saddle—Red was thundering at his heels. Knox flung away his rifle, drew his revolver. Red prodded cautiously until he felt the muzzle of his empty revolver slip into the bobbing holster, then rammed it home. He crowded the Devil a little closer, drawing Knox's fire. *Crack! Crack!* Red smiled grimly, pulled the reins a bit; and Knox, evidently thinking he had scared Red, fired again and beat his horse in the desperate effort to hold the lead.

Soon Red was crowding him again, edging closer, well within pistol shot; but Knox seemed determined to save his last bullets for close quarters. Red yelled; it was like a panther's scream, and too much for Knox's nerves. He jerked about and fired again and again.

No man could reload on a galloping horse. Red had kept count. That emptied Knox's gun.

Red loosened his rope, straightened, flung out the limber rope and let it drag for a moment to make sure that all the kinks were cleared. Then he gathered it into slack coils in his left hand, shook out the loop and began swinging as he drove the spurs hard into the tender black flanks.

The Devil leaped with back-bending bound on bound. Red rose in his stirrups, let go with forward swirl of arm, and the loop sailed ahead as accurately as pouncing hawk's claws, dropped over Knox's hunched body.

Instantly, Red spun a snub around the horn, jerked the reins. The Devil, a champion roper, squatted haunches down, forefeet braced into a skitter that showered dust. The rope snapped taut, and Knox came backward out of the saddle as if thrown.

His horse galloped on a few yards, trotted, walked, then stopped, and put down its head, heaving for breath.

Red hit the ground running, as if he had thrown a steer. The Devil sat back on his haunches, holding the rope taut.

RED poked Knox with a toe, not gently. Knox was unconscious, perhaps with a broken neck. The fall had been enough to burst him wide open. Red had taken him out of the saddle with a rope instead of shooting him out of it because he wanted a live man, one that could talk about the dead boys and Kate Clayton. But if Knox were dead, it was no more than right and proper.

He reloaded the revolver he had emptied, all the while keeping a look about in the shadow-filled starlight just in case the other fellow had escaped serious hurt and wanted to come around and be troublesome. Then he rolled a cigarette and squatted patiently.

Knox began to squirm and groan as his hands struggled weakly. Red had laid the rope around him just below the shoulders, binding Knox's arms to his side, and the Devil kept the rope tight with a steady backward pull.

Red dabbed out the cigarette on the ground. "Knox!"

Knox shook his head like a drunken man and rolled over. Instantly the horse took in the slack. Knox groaned, not yet fully conscious. It was bright enough for Red to have as good a look as he wanted at Knox's face. His hat was gone. His sleek black hair was messed with dirt. There was a drip of blood from Knox's nose.

"Where," said Red, "is Kate Clayton?"

Knox was a tough-bodied man, and fright helped bring him to his senses. His black eyes were snake-like in their steadiness, bright and afraid.

"I don't know," he said sullenly.

Red pulled a gun. "Then I got no reason for not killin' you!"

Red fired. Knox's whole body jumped, much as if he were bounced a little, as he cried out, frightened. The bullet had barely gone over him. Red said, "Shucks," and leveled the long barreled gun again as if to take better aim.

"Don't! I'll tell you—tell—"

"Tell what?"

"About her!"

"You're such a liar you'd tell anything." Red was as conversational as if talking about branding a calf. "Two or three times now I ain't killed you when I orta, all of which mistakes I figger need fixin' up."

Red cocked the .45. The muzzle was point-blank.

"Mell Barber got her!" Knox tried to sit up, but the Devil pulled him down. "Fore God A'mighty, it's truth!" His tone was desperate.

"An I 'spose," said Red coldly, "it was Mell Barber that killed my horse and purt-near shot me the other day!"

Knox's voice was desperate. "But it *was* Mell Barber and them that killed the kids last night and took her up to Joe Strumm's place!"

Knox shook the blood trickle from his nose. It was a little as if he wanted time to think. Red warned, "Talk fast, Knox! I'm in a hurry."

"I had nothin' to do with last night!"

"Liar!"

"I begged him not to! Listen. Joe Strumm an' me was being sent to town to tell that Kilco is bad hurt over at your ranch, so Dave Gridger and the sheriff could go catch him!"

"Who told you that?"

"Them kids!"

"You *are* a liar!"

"They did! That's truth! Mell guessed she'd rode over to meet Kilco and said he'd kill her if she didn't tell him where Kilco was, then Bobby up and yelled out about Kilco!"

"Then why didn't you all come a-rarin' over to our place to see if Kilco is there?"

"Mell had to hide her. He wouldn't leave nobody else have her. He hates Kilco and he's all along wanted *her!*"

"Don't he know that Clayton punchers 'll fill him full of holes for touchin' a hair of her head?"

"Bill Clayton and him are in cahoots!"

"I said Clayton *punchers!*"

"They don't know nothin' about anything. Even me, I didn't know till yesterday—"

Knox tried to make out that it was the blood trickling over his mouth that made him shut up. He was taking time to think.

"Untie me, will you? I'm bad hurt."

"You're going to be worse hurt unless you tell!"

"All I want is a chance to get out of the country. Then I'll tell you ever'thing. 'Fore God!"

"What do you know that I don't, 'cept how to get to Strumm's place?"

"I know," Knox said, "*why* Mell Barber and them shot old Sam Clayton that day!"

"Sure. Bill Clayton put 'em up to it. Him and your friend Gridger."

"How did *you* know that?"

"I got eyes and a nose, feller!" Then, savagely, Red asked, "Was it bargained for Mell Barber to kill her, too?"

"Hell no!" said Knox. Even he flinched from such a thing. "But Mell wants her—part to spite Kilco, part because she is purty. Part because Bill will pay him in cows and horses if he takes her off. Red," Knox went on almost as if talking to somebody who was not unfriendly, "Bill Clayton hisself has helped us all steal Clayton cows so he could have spendin' money." Then, anxiously, "are you goin' to give me a chance to leave the country? I want to quit. I've had—had enough!"

Red thought it over somberly.

"I'm a rustler," Knox admitted. "But I don't hurt women!"

Red grunted. "Shut up—tryin' to make yourself out as not bad some ways.

You are ornery mean. But I will make you a bargain. You take me to where Mell Barber is with his men—how many is with him?"

"Three fellers."

"You take me so they don't know I've come till I get there. Then, if you ain't tried to be cute, I'll let you go. But," Red added solemnly, "this here is a promise, too. If ever I catch you again, anywhere, I'll kill you! Understand?"

"But you will let me go?"

"You heard me."

Knox stammered with sullen distrust, "How do I know you will?"

" 'Cause I do what I say. So don't you try no cute tricks on me tonight about goin' to Strumm's place. I'm in no mood to be monkeyed with, as Mell Barber and them are goin' to find out."

"You—alone?"

Red spoke solemnly. "Don't you think old Sam Clayton and them kids'll be ridin' right along with me? *I do!*"

RED took away Knox's revolver, unsnubbed the rope from the horn and let Knox slip off the noose. Then he got in the saddle and trotted over to where Knox's horse was standing. He rode up close and laid rather than threw the loop about the horse's neck.

He led the horse back and told Knox, "Uncinch and re-saddle."

Knox unsaddled and turned the blankets, saddled again.

"Now give me the rope off your saddle."

Knox loosened the rope, tossed it down. Red pitched the loop back to him. "Fit this around your belly."

"I won't try to get away."

"You do like you're told."

Knox said, "All right." Then he said, "Now see here a minute, Red. I ain't goin' to say I like you any. But how they treated that girl and killed them kids—I liked them kids!"

Red was unimpressed. He knew how men with guns or ropes at their heads all of a sudden got themselves sentiments that they hoped fellows would admire. When Red's mind was made up, he wouldn't change it without a lot of big reasons. He asked, "How'd they kill 'em?"

Knox talked while they rode off together, leg to leg, as close as friends, but there was a noose about Knox's belly and the rope was in Red's hand.

"Joe Strumm, at whose place we stayed, seen her ride over the hill yesterday, so Mell Barber and them—"

"With you along," said Red.

"—rode down to wait on the trail in the scrub oak for her to come back. Her and the kids come along in the dark and was covered before they knowed what was up. Mell, he said, 'You tell me where Kilco is or I'll kill you!' She said, 'I don't know.' That made Mell mad and he hit her. Pete's gun had been took off him, but he jumped his horse right at Mell, and Mell shot 'im. Then Mell said to her, 'I'll shoot you next if you don't tell!' So Bobby he up and yells about Kilco bein' hurt at the Lazy Z ranch. Then Mell he made Bobby get off his horse and shot him just to be mean."

Red growled far down in his throat. "With *you* and some more lookin' on!"

Knox acted as if he didn't hear. "There was some talk about ridin' over to the ranch after Kilco right then. Was old Backman there?"

"Why?"

"She said old Backman was there and stayin' there to help take care of Kilco."

"And though they was five of you, you drug your tails off between your legs! Didn't you know he would be on your trail?"

Knox said, "That is why we bunched some cows and drove 'em back and forth over the tracks to hide which way we went. Up at Strumm's place it was talked over today, and Strumm and me lit out for town to tell Dave where Kilco is."

"Will somebody be on watch at Strumm's place?"

"I ain't sure."

"Don't go hedgin'."

"I *ain't* sure," Knox insisted. "All day we watched careful on account of thinkin' old Backman might've found them kids. Mell knows he can track like an Injun.

"But how's anybody goin' to track in the dark? I would bet they ain't keepin' watch."

"You are bettin' your neck!"

"Then we'd better act like we thought they was lookin' out," Knox admitted.

"Does Bill Clayton know what has happened?"

"He don't, yet. He is most likely in town, drinkin'."

"Gettin' full and having folks think it is from feelin' bad over his dad! Did he expect somethin' like it to happen?"

Knox studied a little, then sounded sour and earnest. "It was bargained for Mell to get rid of her. From what I guess, Mell was goin' to take her down to Mexico and marry her, then Bill was to pay him in horses and cows. But they hadn't dealt me in on the game. All I know is how I heard Mell talkin' last night. That there is honest."

Red believed him, but did not think any better of Knox because of it. An idea had just come to him that was troublesome; it had to do with how pleased Dave Gridger and Bill Clayton were going to be if Mell Barber was killed.

When they were about halfway up the hogback from which Strumm's cabin overlooked the valley, Red said, "I think I'll leave you here."

"You're boss." Knox couldn't help sounding a little pleased.

"I'm goin' to use your saddle blanket to make some shoes for my horse. I'm goin' to tie you up and leave you here. If it works out right, when I come back I'll cut you loose and let you go."

Red made Knox back up to a tree and put his arms behind him. He used the rope to wind it around Knox's feet and neck, too, fastening tight knots.

He unsaddled Knox's horse, spread out the heavy saddle blanket and with a long bladed pocket knife cut it into squares. He punched holes around the edge of the squares, took the buckskin things from Knox's saddle, and threaded them into the holes he had punched.

Red lifted a forefoot of his horse, set it down on the square of blanket, and drew the thong tight, pouch-like.

"I know this is bunglesome," he explained to the Devil, "but you've got to go like on tiptoes. You click a shoe on a rock and I'd maybe be the one that gets surprised."

The horse didn't like having his feet muffled and stamped and kicked a little; but Red was gentle, and led the horse a little ways so that he would get used to it. Then Red mounted.

THE trail was easy to follow, although the scrub oak was thick. Where it began to thin, pines stood up. The horse, unsure of its footing, went cautiously, but Red was patient.

The horse moved on with slow, nearly noiseless plodding. Red kept his eyes glued on the horse's head, watching for the sensitive out-tilted thrust of ears. He could not see very clearly in the shadows, so he leaned forward. The Devil, being a high spirited horse, poked his ears inquiringly every few steps; then, understanding that it wasn't anything of interest, let them droop.

The Devil's ears went out, the head lifted, and he stopped for a moment; then with slow unsure steps went on, with ears still out.

That seemed the signal Red had been waiting for, so he said, "Whoa," softly. He let himself down out of the saddle and stood listening. There was no sound but the murmur of a gentle night wind in the tree-tops. Red unbuckled his

spurs and hung them over the horn, then quietly led the horse to one side of the trail.

He reached for his rifle but the hand fell away, empty. A rifle was troublesome and this would be close work.

RED went forward along the trail, keeping to tiptoes as well as he could, peering intently and not at ease. Somebody might be near, silently waiting. He judged that it was near midnight.

He saw a light dimly; edging around a turn in the trail, he saw that the light came through a doorway. It was a strong light, as if from a big lamp in a small room. There was the black outline of a man in the doorway. He stood looking out, shoulder against the door jamb. Every detail of shadow outline was clear, even the dog-ear flaps of his boots, the tousled top of his bare head. He was a tall fellow and the curved butt of his gun stuck out, low on his thigh. A dull glow brightened at his mouth as he inhaled deeply on the cigarette.

Red, a hundred feet or more away, crouched low, and was aware of an indistinct mumble inside the house. Red would have to wait until the man went inside the room before he could move safely to where he had a view through the door. Three men, Knox had said. Red slowly began to suspect that Knox was a liar. It seemed that there were many voices inside the cabin. The fellow in the doorway finished his cigarette and gave it a careless flip, showering tiny sparks from the rock it struck against. He turned, resting the other shoulder against the door and facing inside.

Red hesitated to stir. High heeled boots were awkward for stealthy movements; and if he tried to get around to the front of the door he might be seen. Pine needles were brittle and twigs cracked under even light steps. He sat down cautiously, crossed a leg, began to pull at a boot. If he couldn't risk making his way so as to see through the doorway, he could slip up in through the shadows to the other side of the cabin.

Another man came near the door. He was shorter, broader, and without his face being seen, gave the impression of being older. Red heard his voice, not his words. It was a rough, grating voice; and the tall man laughed with a crackling sound.

Red thought, "Things ain't goin' to be so funny soon, maybe."

The shorter man moved restlessly, passing from sight. The tall man stood with his back to the door. A murmuring was going on in the room. The few clear words were oaths. Voices sounded discontented rather than angered.

Red moved sidewise with stealthy shift of feet, keeping his face toward the doorway. There was some faint rustle in every movement, and the rustle sounded very loud to his ears. The man turned in the doorway, looking out. Red drew a gun. The man evidently was thinking rather than listening. He spoke, and what he said was clearly heard, because he talked without facing those within the room.

"I think you're plumb loco, Mell. I never yet heard of a feller makin' a woman like him by hog-tyin' her!"

Laughter answered—more laughter than could come from two mouths. The next voice must have been near the door. Red could not see the man's shadow but heard the voice:

"She shore left her mark on Mell!"

Again laughter, and a sharp voice said confidently, "Never yet seen the woman I couldn't tame! She'll be eatin' outa my hand purty soon."

Then the tones fell away again.

Red moved on, feeling that he must know where Kate was before he broke in on these men. When he was halfway around the house he saw a ghost-dim glow through another doorway, knew that it was lighted by a candle. He came up close to the cabin's windowless wall

"There are four of them. I can't let you—"

and felt his way around the corner.

Here was a rickety lean-to room that had been added to the cabin to give more bunk space; it probably had been added after the owner of the cabin became the friend of outlaws.

Red reached the lean-to doorway and crouched. A thick candle stood upright on a thick smear of tallow on a ledge made of a split log braced against the wall of the cabin. The candle flame was smoky and bad smelling. The room had a sour odor. The dirt floor was not even beaten earth, but dirty with loose trash

and dust. There was a wide bunk on each side. In a corner were empty whisky bottles. There was no window and only one door. To enter the lean-to from the cabin it was necessary to come around outdoors.

Red rose slowly and stood in the doorway with finger to lips.

Kate lay huddled on the dirty-looking blankets of a bunk, and gave a start at seeing him. She twisted about, half sitting up, and looked as if she could not believe what she saw. The smelly candle did not give much light to see by. She was sick with worries and fear.

Red came in barefooted, opening his pocket knife. Her ankles were tied and her hands were tied behind her. He thought that her face was dirty, but when he bent close to reach behind her to cut the rope on her wrists, he saw that her cheek was bruised. Her eyes were feverishly bright.

He cut the rope about her wrists. They had been tied so hard that the rope marks were in the flesh and she held her hands stiff as if they had been frozen. Kate sat with her loosened feet hanging over the bunk and looked up at him, her face drawn haggardly, and the bruise was like a smear of dirt on her cheek.

Red touched the bruise with tip of forefinger, jerked his head toward the cabin wall. Kate nodded.

He helped her to stand, but her legs were cramped and the muscles responded so clumsily that she tottered. He put his arms about her, lifted her, and went out slowly for fear of stumbling in the darkness outside the room. Over near the corral that was directly behind the lean-to, he put her down. The horses stirred.

When he set her feet on the ground she took hold of his shoulders with fingers that would not grip. They were still too stiff. "Red, did you come alone?"

"Um."

"What are you going to do?"

"What I orta do." He sounded sullen.

"Don't! Please, Red! There are too many, and if anything happens to you—"

"You shut up. They killed the kids. They hit you. Only I want that Mell Barber alive so, by God, he'll talk!"

"T—then you know? About him and —and *Bill*?"

"Yes'm. How many is they?"

"Four. One rode in this evening. And they have sent Joe Strumm and Frank Knox into town to tell people that Jim Kilco is wounded over at your ranch!"

"I know. I've got Knox tied up down on the trail, and that Strumm feller is afoot somers down on the flat, if he ain't dead. Does that Barber feller come in once in a while to see you there?"

"Yes! Oh, I—"

"Then you get right over here and stay set. I'll wait till he comes if it's mornin'."

"Red, please! Can't we get away? It isn't as if it were one man. There are four of them. I can't let you—"

He spoke simply, with conviction. "Somehow I feel that old Sam and them kids are lookin' on—waitin'. You set still and don't you peep!"

RED went back into the lean-to and stood beside the door. He looked toward the bunk where Kate had been. The light was very dim, but Barber might guess right away that she had gone. He quickly bunched up the blankets in a way that faintly resembled the outline of some one lying down, then went back to the side of the door, standing off a little. Barber would have to look well to one side to see him.

Time dragged. He knew that fifteen minutes must seem an hour or more, but he kept waiting until he heard a voice call, "But if you loosen her hands, you'll come back more scratched 'n you are!"

Red stooped a little with a drawn gun in his hand. Footsteps, dragging rowels,

came near. The man stopped outside the lean-to door, looking in. Red was afraid that he was going to back up, suspiciously. Mel Barber said, "Asleep, huh?" as if finding her asleep was unexpected.

He came in, stooping slightly at the doorway because of his high-crowned hat. The white scar on his hatchet-thin face was conspicuous. He needed a shave and the beard would not grow on the scar surface. The smell of whisky was as strong as if he had been pouring it down his neck, but he wasn't drunk.

Some stir of Red's, or some warning sense of his near presence, made Mell Barber look around. It was dim, but he saw the lean shape not more than an arm's length away swing at him just as the lashing heel of a mule would have swung. He tried to jerk himself back, a hand going gunward as he bent sidewise to dodge.

Red struck, not overhand because the roof was too low, but with a rising sidelong swing. The long barreled .45 had started on about a level with Red's knee. It curved up at arm's length, topped Barber's shoulder, smacked alongside his head. Red gave the gun barrel all of his weight, putting fury into the blow. He wanted Mell Barber alive, but struck as if to kill him.

Barber teetered on loose knees and went down as limply as a wet sack, pressing his face in the dust. There had been no sound except his muffled grunt, and the snap of gun steel alongside Barber's head.

Red slapped the gun into its holster and scrambled along the rumpled blankets for the pieces of rope that he had cut from Kate's wrists and feet. He yanked Barber's wrists up behind him. They were small wrists and slim hands for a man. Red clenched his teeth as he drew the knots, remembering the marks on Kate's wrists. He bound Barber's legs, then took off the dust-smeared handkerchief from Barber's neck, gave it a shake, spreading it. When it was folded corner-wise he pushed it between Barber's loose jaws and knotted it behind his head.

Red stood up, brushed his hands together, ridding them of dust, hitched at his belts, gave his hat a yank to tighten it on his head. As he stepped out of the lean-to his heart jumped and a hand flashed at his hip, but it was only Kate.

"I just had to see!" she murmured, touching him. There was praise in her low voice.

He gave her a shove that was not gentle. "You get back over yonder and stay. I ain't half done!" He went on around the house.

There was a large rusty lamp on the table near the center of the room. The lamp had a round wick and a new clean chimney. Light smeared the ground outside the cabin door.

Red stepped into the doorway, appearing as noiselessly as a shadow. His right leg, advanced a little, was bent at the knee, quite as if about to jump on into the room. One gun was leveled breast-high, the other had its muzzle up at the holster's edge. The three men saw him at the same time and were perfectly motionless with surprise. The thought in each man's head was that Red was not alone. They imagined that armed men stood in the darkness behind him.

"All right, you fellers!" he snapped. "Do something!"

THE tall man who had loitered in the doorway was sitting with hands on his knees and a tin cup in one hand. His hand opened; whisky splattered in the floor. The shorter man had some weeks' beard on his jaws. His small black eyes popped wide, looking like two burnt holes in a blanket, and his bristly lips opened as if it were hard to breath. Very slowly, with little hesitant jerks, he raised his hands, getting them higher and higher.

The third man sat at the rough table. He held a cigarette half lifted to his mouth. His hat was off. He had a bushy head and straggling tangles of hair down along the back of his neck. He was a bull-like fellow, bulgingly muscular, with hard eyes, thick lips. He wore a spotted fawn-skin vest from which much of the hair had been rubbed away, as if moth-eaten. He stared at Red, stared past Red as if trying to see other men, stared again at Red. His voice was low and harsh, "Who the hell?"

Red clicked back the hammer of the leveled gun, took his thumb from the spur.

The bristly faced man who already had his hands up blurted, "W-where's Mell?"

"Hog-tied!" said Red.

The tall man who had dropped the cup looked furtively aside. He saw that bristly-face already had his hands well up, saw that the bull-like man was lifting the hand that held the cigarette, then he, too, put his hands shoulder high and sat rigidly as if with a stiff neck.

"Who are you?" the bull-necked man asked in a calm, cautious tone.

"Red Clark!" And having spoken, Red's weakness for talking loosened his tongue a little. "Measly lot of bad men, you! You like to kill! You killed them two kids! Why don't you try it now? Turnin' up your bellies like a lot of dyin' snakes!"

Then from the darkness beside the doorway Kate Clayton cried,

"Oh here is Mr. Backman, Red!"

Kate's voice and its nearness gave Red a start; and he half turned to greet the tall old frontiersman.

Within the cabin a muffled blow brought a swirl of vanishing light as the bull-necked man struck the lamp into the air.

The blow had jarred off the chimney and it shattered on the table. The round wick was smothered as if blown out by a breath. The tin lamp crashed against the wall, thudded to the floor. Before it struck the floor the three fellows jumped, changing position so Red wouldn't know where to shoot at them. Flame laced the darkness with criss-cross flashes. The smoky jar of rapid gunfire in the small room was deafening. Kate screamed.

Red had fired twice between the time the hurled lamp hit the wall and dropped to the dirt floor, then he leaped to one side of the door. The darkness was smokily dense in the cabin. Dagger-pointed flames stabbed at one another. Then there was the floundering beat of badly hurt bodies on the floor, oaths, groans.

Ten seconds, scarecely more, passed, then silence except for one rattling breath. Ten seconds more of silence, and Kate's low voice begged:

"Red?"

Red moved to the doorway, stepped outside.

"I'll be damned," he said in a low awed voice.

"Red? Are you hurt?"

"Me? No. But I'll be—where is Mr. Backman?"

Kate took hold of him. It was almost as dead black outdoors here under the thick tops of the pines as in the cabin. Her fingers groped quickly for Red's collar, and her face was very close. She murmured humbly, "I thought—I thought if they believed—oh, you aren't hurt?"

"So you just said that? It's all right. Funny, though." He sounded a little bewildered. "I just shot twict, then jumped quick off to one side. Then—then they killed 'emselves. They was bad scairt. They shot at who was shootin'." Solemnly he said, "Makes me feel funny—like maybe old Sam and kids *was* in there!"

Red went into the lean-to for the candle. He stooped with it and saw that Mell Barber's eyes were open in a kind of unfocused stare. Red pinched the

candle wick, breaking off the crust; holding a palm before the flame, he went back to the cabin. The hoarse breathing had stopped.

"Be careful!" Kate urged. Red carried the candle from one dead man to the other, then put it on the table.

He figured that at least one of his two rapid shots had hit the bull-like man in the breast and knocked him over. Being a tough fellow, he had begun to shoot, but was too dazed to know where he was shooting, and had fired at flame-flashes. So the shooting was all mixed up. Anyhow, Red had fired but twice and three men were dead, and some had been hit more than once.

"I'm goin' to leave 'em," he said, holding the candle in one hand as he pulled the rickety cabin door to. "I've got to get Mell Barber down to our house, then into town. I've got to get the kids took care of proper. I've got to get you home to your ranch—"

"No, Red. I can't go home. I can't meet Bill again, ever. I have always tried to like Bill. I felt sorry for him because I thought Daddy was hard on him. But now I hate him!"

"How it come you know?"

"Mell Barber. He was to take me to Mexico as his wife and Bill would pay him, but I—I can't talk of it."

"'Course not. Here." He gave her the candle and rolled a cigarette, put the tip of it to candle flame. He blew smoke at the candle, watched the smoke. "Mell Barber's goin' to talk. I want the judge and Marshal Vickers to hear 'im. But I been thinkin'. Nobody is liable to believe 'im. Bill and Dave Gridger 'll lie like hell. But things 'll work out somehow. They got to."

Red searched for his boots, took off his socks, shook out the dust as well as he could. He felt better as he stamped his feet down into the snug leather. He saddled two horses, put ropes on two more, and turned the others loose from the corral. Then he went for Mell Barber.

BARBER had squirmed about in the dust until he was almost choked. The dust clung to the moisture of the handkerchief between his jaws and was like mud. His small eyes were full of hate and fear.

As soon as Red removed the handkerchief, Barber gasped, "Water!"

Red brought in a rusty dipper full of water, held it to Barber's mouth. Barber swished water about, then drank a few swallows.

Barber said, "For God's sake, loosen up the ropes on my wrists. It's killin' me!"

"Get on your feet, Barber. We're ridin'!"

"You're proud, ain't you, to be takin' me in alive!"

"Nope. But if I took you in dead Dave Gridger and Bill Clayton would be too happy. They could go on bein' thought nice honest fellers, like they will be if you let yourself be hung without tellin' the truth. Come along!"

He gave Red a squinty stare. He said, "I won't never be hung!"

Red shook his head. "*They* won't help you get away, feller. *They* want you dead. If you keep your mouth shut and stay alive, they'd have to whack with you. So they'd rather you died. And you sure will. You murdered them kids and Kate Clayton saw you! So even if you try to say Bill and Dave put you up to killin' old Sam, they'll just call you a liar and help hang you quick. I'm only takin' you in alive just to spite them!"

Red, on foot, led his little cavalcade down the trail. Kate was in a saddle. Barber, with hands bound, his feet hobbled, followed.

When they reached the Devil, Red cut the pieces of saddle blanket from the horse's feet, fastened on his spurs and got into the saddle.

A mile or so farther down the trail he

stopped again to see about Knox, but Knox was gone. Red said to himself, "This is funny." He groped about the tree where he had tied Knox and picked up pieces of rope. A match flare showed that the rope had been cut. Somebody had come along the trail; Knox had called out and found a friend. Red guessed that most likely it had been Joe Strumm. If so, Knox had evidently advised him not to go on.

"I promised 'im he could go," Red reflected, "and he's gone. So all is square—till we meet again."

When they came down off the hill the moon was up and the country had a look as if covered lightly with snow. Kate was crying softly.

"He killed them in cold blood!" she said after a spell.

"Yes'm."

"He won't escape hanging, will he?"

"If he does, I'll shoot 'im."

When they came to where Red had found the bodies, he got down. The moonlight came down on the scrub oaks, laid bright splotches on the ground among the deep shadows. Red stooped low, moved slowly, frowned as if something were wrong with his eyes.

"Bobby was right here in the dust."

Bobby was not there now. Red sheltered a match flame and scrutinized the dust. There was the plain impress of where Bobby's body had been. Red got down on his knees and struck another match, then shook it out and got up.

"It's all right, Miss Kate," he said. "We'll be ridin'."

He had seen the imprint of long moccasined feet.

It was sun-up when the little cavalcade wound slowly up from the valley and came before the ranch house.

Mr. Backman was standing there with his rifle on his arm, his long beard flowing down his breast. He was so still that the buckskin fringe of his shirt did not move. He scarcely looked at Red, but looked steadily at Mell Barber.

Jane's face was tear-stained. Kate jumped from the saddle and they put their arms about each other and began to cry.

The frowsy cook stood slope-shouldered with his hands in his pockets and the corners of his mouth dragged down. He looked sick. His bleary eyes peered inquiringly at Red, who sat motionlessly in the saddle, hands on the horn, waiting for old Mr. Backman to speak.

"That him, Red?" said Mr. Backman.

"Yeah."

"Why you brung him *alive?*"

"So we could hang Dave Gridger and another feller, too!"

Mr. Backman nodded gravely.

RED left Barber under the old frontiersman's eyes and took the horses to the stable. He returned to the house the back way, took off his hat and shirt, pumped a pan full of water, used strong lye soap and scrubbed head, arms, breast and face. The water was pleasantly cool.

Cook brought out a clean towel and sat on the end of the wash bench until Red was ready for it. Jerking his head, he said, "They ain't spoke, but Kilco looks like he will bite him to death!"

Red spoke through folds of the towel as he wiped his face. "Bring me a clean shirt and some socks, will you?"

Cook looked at Red and did not move for a long minute or two. "Miss Kate has told what all you done." He got up, stuck out his hand awkwardly. Without a word they shook hands, then the cook went in to find the clean shirt and socks in Red's war bag.

When he came out, Red was sitting on an overturned bucket washing his feet.

"Fact is," he said, "I'm hungry."

"You'll be fed, son." The cook paused, then as if ashamed of deep feelings, "I'd steal from a blind widder lady to make you flapjacks, anytime!"

"You'll come back more scratched 'n you are!"

Barber came out ahead of Mr. Backman, who looked questioningly at Red.

"Dad, it's thisaway. I'm fixin' to take him right along into town. In town he is goin' to talk or he ain't. He thinks he ain't. He thinks Dave Gridger and Bill Clayton and maybe that rabbit-faced sheriff is goin' to get him away. But they ain't! They are goin' to want him hung. Well, a man has a right to wash up and change his shirt before he is hung."

Red could not quite untie the knots on Barber's wrists, so he cut the rope. Barber's wrists and hands were numb. He rubbed them for a long time on his pants legs to bring back the blood.

Mr. Backman stroked his beard. "I come over for a little visit last night and when I heard about you bein' gone, I

set out on horseback to foller. I found the boys' bodies and saw you'd been there and gone on. I'd 've had to wait till mornin' anyhow to trail you, so I come back."

Red didn't say anything. They patiently waited for Barber to wash himself as well as he wanted to.

It wasn't easy for Barber to wash. He was covered with dust. His head was sore, and the blue-black bruise showed more clearly when he washed. He went to the pump three times for water and soused his head down into the last panful. Soapy water was in his eyes and he groped for the towel. Red got up and handed it to him, then sat down.

Barber wiped his head for a long time. He wadded the towel and threw it at the wash bench, and without looking at anybody said in a mean voice, "I sure am not goin' to take all the blame on myself!"

Red said, "I reckon you'll have to. They'll just call you a liar and you can't prove you ain't."

Barber stared at Red from the eye that wasn't swollen.

"Maybe I can't," he mumbled, "but by God they was in it!"

"Feller, if I didn't believe you, you wouldn't be here."

They all went into the house.

THERE was a blanket spread smoothly, as if over sleeping bodies, on one of the bunks. Barber looked toward that bunk with no trace of feeling. He stared straight toward where Kate was sitting beside Kilco. Jane sat with her face in her hands. Her black hair was all tangled but she did not care.

Kilco put up a hand to Red and pressed it hard. He looked pretty sick and haggard, not like the big handsome fellow Red had first met. "Why didn't you kill him?" It was half snarl and wholly reproachful.

" 'Cause I wanted him alive."

"He'll get away from you!" he said.

Red jerked his head toward Mr. Backman. "Me, maybe. But not dad there."

From clear over by the table Barber spoke up. "I'll tell you why *he* wants me killed. So I won't tell nobody about him havin' a wife and two kids over in—"

Kilco's face took on a spasm of fury and his whole body moved jerkily as if trying to jump from the bunk. Kate had an expression as if somebody had slapped her in the face, and she stared at Kilco as if afraid that he wouldn't deny it. He denied it at the top of his voice, "That's a lie!"

Barber laughed. "You've fooled her good. You've got a wife and kids and—"

"I don't believe it!" Kate cried, but somehow as if she didn't entirely disbelieve.

"You, Barber, shut your mouth and keep it shut till some food is on the table!"

The cook called sourly, "Here it is!" and planked down a big plate stacked with flapjacks.

Barber ate without lifting his eyes from the food. Red poured a heavy stream of black-strap over the grease-soaked flapjacks, cut them into chunks, held a dripping chunk before his mouth and asked, "Dad, do we make a couple of graves before we go to town?"

Mr. Backman wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Me and cook have done that a'ready, son."

Barber stabbed a piece of steak and drew it dripping from the platter to his plate. "I sure as hell ain't goin' to take all the blame." He had to chew on one side because the other side was so swollen. He chewed a while and gulped coffee. He put the coffee cup down carefully, spread his elbows, leaned forward without lifting his eyes. "Jim Kilco has got a wife and two kids over in New Mexico."

Red rolled a cigarette. Barber said, "Give me the makin's." Red laid tobacco

and papers on the table. He stared at Red. "You are the luckiest damn fool in the world!" Red nodded, indifferently, thinking of other things.

Mr. Backman said, "Son, you fetch the horses. We'll bury the boys, then set out."

Red dabbed out the cigarette, pushed back his stool. "In a minute." He walked over to Kilco. "See here, you been told, ain't you, that Bobby up and said you was here?"

Kilco nodded. "But you got him there, and the others are wiped out!"

"Not Joe Strumm and Knox. They know. They may tell somebody."

Kilco instantly had the outlaw's worry about being caught. "I'll be like a rat in a trap!"

"All I can promise," Red went on, "is that if Knox and Strumm did go to town and tell that sheriff and Gridger, and we meet 'em, I'll turn 'em back. If it's the marshal, I'll coax my best to get him to go back, but I won't pull a gun on him. And they is one thing I want to know. Have you got a wife?"

Kilco all of a sudden looked mad. He glared at Red and shouted, "No!" Then he glared some more and said, "But if I had, I don't see how it is any of your business!"

"It sure is *my* business that no man makes who I work for believe lies! And I'm runnin' the Clayton ranch—or goin' to be about this time tomorrow!"

"Oh you are?" said Kilco. "What about this ranch here?"

"Both of 'em. And the whole damn country beside, if needful to make people leave my range and cows alone!"

Kilco said, "You talk purty big!"

Then he saw the look on Kate's face and wished that he had kept a quieter tongue. Red's blazing directness appealed to her, and deep down in her troubled heart she was afraid that Jim Kilco did have a wife—and if he did, then he had been hopelessly dishonest with her, saying he would turn over a new leaf, take her off somewhere and become a respected cattleman.

"I talk purty big, do I?" Red asked somberly. "Well, sir, if I wanted to brag a little, I could say I had been big enough to purt-near wipe out a bad bunch that folks call the Kilcos!"

Then Red went out to saddle the horses.

THEY jogged into Manning Springs a little after noon, and old man Manning came shambling out with the gray dog at his heels and a wide grin. He called, "Howdy, boy!" and raised a fluttery arm. He knew who Mr. Backman was. When Manning saw the third man's arms were tied, he pushed back his old hat.

"Well, now who have you got there?"

"Mell Barber," said Red.

Manning parted his mouth in a wide gulp.

Red slid from the saddle, hooked thumbs in his belt.

"Pop," he said, "I've got some news. I'm runnin' the Clayton ranch, and—"

"Yore *what!* Why Bill rode by this mornin' an' he didn't say—"

"He don't know it yet. Now water is mighty precious, pop. 'Specially this time of year. You'd better clean out the ditch, plug up them leaky butts in the trough, and I see you've got a slip. If it's too hard for you grade the water hole better, I'll get out a mule skinner."

Old Manning almost wanted to be mad. "Old Sam, he never made no complaint about how I—"

"Old Sam owned the ranch. If he wanted his water to waste, 'twas his lookout. But me, I got to see that purt-near ever' drop goes into some cow's belly."

Old Manning glared for a minute; then shifted the chew until it bulged out a lean cheek, opened his mouth. "You do beat all for lookin' like a fool kid an' not bein' one! But how come Bill don't know yet?"

"He asked me to be boss that day after you and me fooled some fellers here that tried to fool us, and I wouldn't take it. But I changed my mind. I've took over Miss Kate's share, and I'm takin' over the other half along with it. You say Bill rode by. Which way?"

"He rode out home last night. He had been drinkin'. He rode back this mornin', looking sorta peaked and in a hurry. He is all broke up over his dad's death."

"I reckon."

Mell Barber sneered.

There was some silence, then Mr. Backman said, "I am thinkin' it might be a good idee, son, if we don't get to town till after dark."

Red nodded.

"I got a big pot o' beans." Manning said. "And I don't want you sendin' anybody out here to run that slip. You git me a couple of mules an' I'll fix that water hole up. I reckon old Sam was so worrit about rustlers he never much noticed maybe that water was bein' wasted a mite."

Barber snarled, "Bill was the biggest rustler of the bunch!"

Manning said, "Wha-at?"

Barber grinned and jerked his head, then cussed Bill and brought Dave Gridger's name into the cussing. Red looked up, glad to see that Mell Barber was feeling that way. When Barber quieted down, Red asked of Manning:

"You seen Knox ride by?"

"No."

"Nor a feller named Joe Strumm?"

"No."

"An' Bill, he didn't say nothin' this mornin' about Miss Kate not bein' home?"

"No. He just watered his hoss and rode on. He looked sorta like he didn't feel good. Why would he wanta steal his own cows?"

Barber said, "He hated his old man. And Gridger hated old Sam, too. I'll fix them two—" Barber worked himself into quite an excitement in cussing them.

Since it seemed better not to get into town until after dark, when there would be less excitement over Mell Barber being brought in, Red put the horses away.

They went into the dim 'dobe and ate. Barber's hands were untied, and Mr. Backman, with his rifle on his knee, sat close to the door and did not take his eyes off Barber.

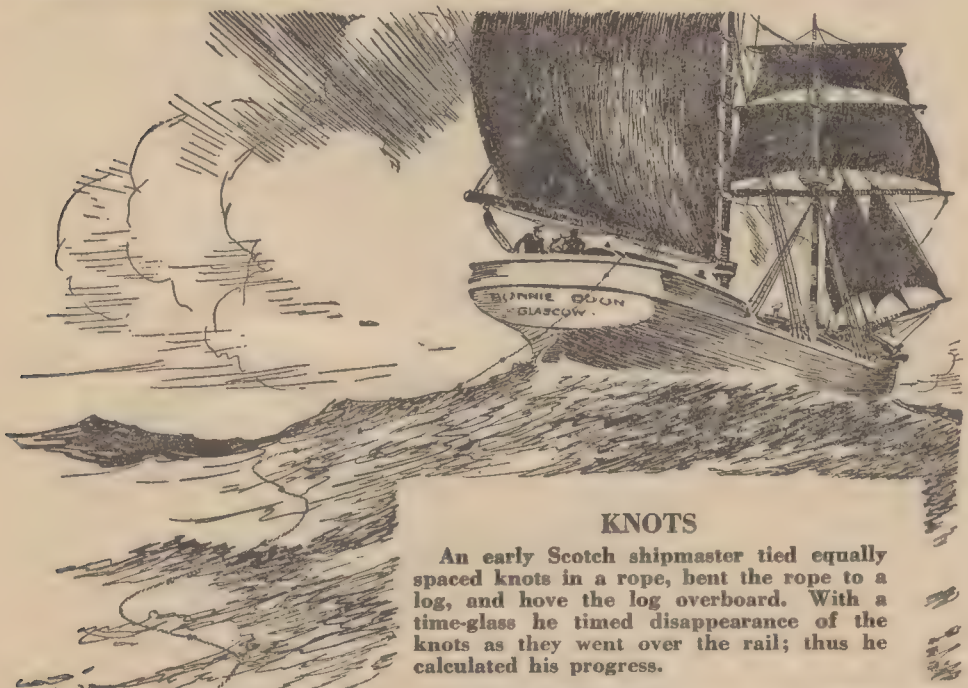
Red leaned his head back against the wall and shut his eyes, but he did not sleep. His lids popped wide at the least movement. He had been through a lot and had had no sleep, but he had a way of staying on a job as long as a job needed him.

When it was nearly sundown Red brought up the horses. He came back in the house and drank another cup of cold black coffee. Mr. Backman was tying up Barber's wrists. Red peeled an onion, took a plate of greasy beans, sat on a corner of the table, ate the beans with a spoon. One spoonful of beans, one bite of onion. He chewed slowly, enjoying the flavor. When he had finished, he announced gravely, "I sure do like to eat!"

(To be concluded)

TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS

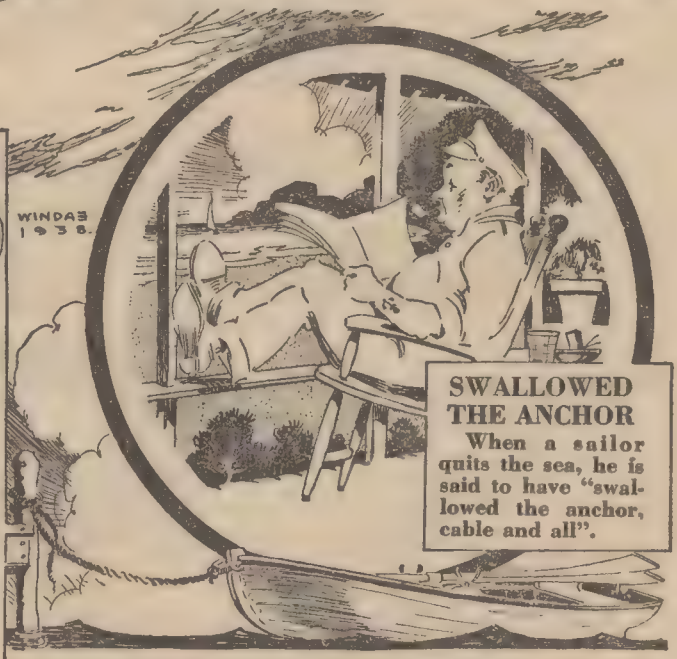


KNOTS

An early Scotch shipmaster tied equally spaced knots in a rope, bent the rope to a log, and hove the log overboard. With a time-glass he timed disappearance of the knots as they went over the rail; thus he calculated his progress.

HARRIET LANE

This universal nickname for canned mutton originated with the brutal murder, in 1890, of a woman by that name. The victim was hacked into small pieces. Sailors swear the pieces were—well, we won't go into that.



SWALLOWED THE ANCHOR

When a sailor quits the sea, he is said to have "swallowed the anchor, cable and all".

PAINTER—This name for the short rope by which a small boat is made fast to a landing-stage, is a corruption of the French "Peyntours," meaning a bight or noose.

He caught a glimpse of a white face . . .

CROOKED AX

By RAY MILLHOLLAND

FIRST time I laid eyes on Jack Barnes I could tell by the h'ist of those shoulders of his under his mackinaw that he was a white water man. Which to us old time loggers means he was a river driver who could ride a log on a roaring spring freshet, and break up a wicked jam of big pine sticks without ever losing the smile in his eyes.

And first time I saw this Jack Barnes stripped in the bunkhouse, up there at camp seven on the Big Rifle tract of Six Counties Lumber Company, I says afterwards to the blacksmith: "Pat, the new lad has everything, lacking twenty more pounds of beef, to be the top logger of the whole blamed St. Helens country."

"Barring Ballhooter McCarthy," growls Pat back at me, and snaps his finger against the blade of the long cross-cut saw he was sharpening. "Yuh, many's the pushing lad Ballhooter has bruk acrost his knee, black shame to him."

It had to come, of course, but I was hoping it wouldn't—I mean this Jack Barnes swinging right into the job his first day at camp seven and showing the whole woods crew what an ax was for and how a real logger used it. No company ax for this lad. He brought along his own, strapped on his turkey, with a canvas sheath for the helve to keep off the dampness and the double-bitted blade wrapped in the greased sleeve of an old mackinaw.

Cold it was that morning when the crew rolled out and headed for the

woods; the trace chains on the skidding teams were ringing like hard little bells, and frost formed on the collar of a man's jacket the minute his breath hit it. Nobody gave young Jack Barnes much of a tumble. They didn't dast until Ballhooter McCarthy gave the word.

Ballhooter, understand, wasn't the woods boss. He was just head chopper for a crew of fallers, his job being to notch the trees to make them fall without hanging up in the standing timber and where they'd land without shattering.

Seeing Jack Barnes warming the blade of his ax with his bare hands to get the frost out of it before he cut into his first tree, Ballhooter says to Dan Forbes, the woods boss: "Got a new woodpecker, I see. What's the idea?"

"Got orders to double log footage," was all Dan Forbes said and walked off.

And right off the fallers working with Ballhooter knew he wasn't liking it a little bit that there was a new chopper in the woods. He drove 'em till the steam raised off their mackinaw collars.

"What's the rush, Ballhooter?" one of the fallers stopped to ask while he swabbed off his face with the back of his mitten. "Hitting this pace, we'll have our briars into the North Pole afore sundown."

Ballhooter shoved the man away from the big cross-cut saw he was talking about and set it going. You could hear the whine of it clear across to where Jack Barnes and his crew were working.

"There!" says Ballhooter, backing clear as the big tree started cracking at the butt. "Put your muscle into it, man. They're asking for double log footage, but we'll give 'em triple! Lay into your briars, boys."

That first day Balhooter's crew snowed Jack Barnes under. That was because the new lad didn't know there was a race on. He had pushed his men till they were glad to quit that night, but they weren't dragging their feet the way Ballhooter's fallers were when the woods crew hit camp seven.

"I'll give you another day to get your hand in," Dan Forbes told Jack Barnes. "After that I don't want to be able to hear myself shout for the crash of timber in the woods."

"Meaning I'm a bunkhouse logger?" asks Jack Barnes, turning a lazy blue eye down at his woods boss.

"Meaning anything you want to think!" Dan Forbes snapped right back. "After tomorrow your cut will scale with Ballhooter McCarthy's or I'll try a new head chopper in the east forty."

What Dan Forbes was saying didn't fool any of the rest of us, and we didn't like it any too good either. Why? Because we were the goats in this row Dan was deliberately stirring up between Ballhooter and this new lad Barnes. We didn't hold it as personal against Dan, seeing that it's the job of a wood boss to deck logs on the rollway for the spring drive, and deck as many as he can. Down comes the cost of logging when he gets a red hot race going. Yes, and up goes his season's bonus from the big office too. Everybody wins but the loggers who do the job.

WE FED big that night. Dan Forbes saw to that, knowing you can't drive a man without throwing in extra feed to make up for the weight he sweats off during the day.

Up at the head of the table sat Ballhooter McCarthy, his big bush of red hair hanging over his plate while he shoveled in a good quarter-peck of boiled potatoes and a half cabbage and a quartered fore-shoulder of smoked ham. Between whiles he'd rip off a big square of short bread and down it with a swig from his tea pannikin.

Finally Ballhooter shoved back his tin plate and kept his big paws on the

table. We knew then he was going to notice Jack Barnes for the first time.

"Hey, Woodpecker!" Ballhooter yells down the table at Jack Barnes, and he grins when he says it.

We all look at the new man to see how he takes it, because calling a man a woodpecker in the woods is the same as saying he don't know how to use an ax.

Jack Barnes didn't look up. So Ballhooter breaks off a hunk of short bread and fires it down the table. It lands in Jacks plate, and Ballhooter laughs. "You, I mean, son!"

Well, there wasn't a sign of bad temper in Jack's blue eyes when he lifted that black head of his.

"My mistake," he says, slow and easy. "I thought you was a hog squealing for more swill." With that, he flips what's in his plate square into Ballhooter's face.

For a minute, there, you could hear the cook-house cat purring under the stove. It looked like a fight was coming as soon as Ballhooter scraped a blob of boiled cabbage out of his eye.

Ballhooter just laughed and reached out and picked up a stove chunk from the wood box. Without changing the grin on his face, he broke it in his hands and tossed it back in the box. Some of us older hands sat there and shivered at the sound of that wood snapping. Too much like the sound of a man's leg bone getting broke in one of those wild fights Ballhooter gets into about once every so often.

"Can you do card tricks, too, Mr. McCarthy?" asks Jack Barnes, his eyes big and round like a kid's at a circus.

Ballhooter blinked and wagged his head. He couldn't figure out whether this new lad was handing him the hooraw or was scared stiff. But when one of the swampers in Jack Barnes's crew laughed, Ballhooter pinned him to the cook-house wall with a stare that nearly knocked his breath out.

"Speaking of card tricks," Ballhooter suddenly pipes up, with a broad wink around the table for everybody but Jack Barnes, "who wants to play nosey poker?"

Which is a game nobody plays more than once with Ballhooter without standing a good chance of getting a broken nose out of the first deal, because Ballhooter thinks it fun to stick his forefinger out along the back of the cards he swings when he collects a bet.

So nobody says they want to play nosey poker with him. Except Jack Barnes, who first fills his pipe and gets it going good.

Then he smiles, slow and easy, with the stem in his teeth and says, "Name your game, Mr. McCarthy. Stud, spit-in-the-river, deuces wild—anything that will stir your blood."

"Yours, you mean," laughs Ballhooter. "We'll make it stud."

SOMEBODY grabbed down the cook's deck of cards from the shelf over the stove and tossed it in front of Ballhooter. Then we all closed in and watched. It was hot in the cook shanty, under the oil lamp. You could almost lean against the smell of sweat coming off our double-fleeced undershirts.

Nobody talked. Jack Barnes cut, and won the deal.

Ballhooter took a look at his hole card. "More of the same, Woodpecker."

"Sorry, Mr. McCarthy; just spreading 'em tonight." Jack Barnes finished the deal and tossed out one match on Ballhooter's bet. "Raising that, Mr. McCarthy?"

"Two. And the name's Ballhooter, Woodpecker."

"Sorry, Mr. McCarthy. Could make a little song of that, couldn't we? . . . The woodpecker pecks away millions of specks, from McCarthy's empty red nut—"

"Dry up. Are you seeing me?"

Jack Barnes turned up his hole card and shook his head. "No luck here, Mr. McCarthy."

Ballhooter rubbed the sweat beads off his upper lip with a slide of his red flannel undershirt sleeve. He picked up his hand and bunched the cards in a hard, stiff bundle.

"Three cracks, I win. Stick out your bill, Woodpecker!"

"Any time you're ready, Mr. McCarthy," says Jack Barnes, and covers his eye with his own cards, sticking out his nose for Ballhooter to slap.

Smack, came Ballhooter's blow against Jack's nose.

"Make 'em whistle, Mr. McCarthy, while you've got the chance."

Ballhooter raised his hand with the cards clinched for his second slap at Jack's nose. This time, we expected Ballhooter to pull his old trick—stick out his finger to back up his cards and just about tear Jack's nose right off his face.

Smack, came Ballhooter's whistler. But no finger was backing it up.

"Am I still Mr. McCarthy to you, Woodpecker?"

"Once more, Mr. McCarthy."

Smack, again. But no finger behind it. Ballhooter pitched his hand across to Jack Barnes. Jack shoved them back.

"Your deal, Mr. McCarthy."

That constant ding-donging at his name was getting under Ballhooter's shirt. The kid shouldn't have been working on him that way. It only riled Ballhooter hotter than ever, because he couldn't cut back with his tongue the way he was getting cut. The rest of us stood by, making bets with a wink or a nod that the next pot Ballhooter won he was going to tear off the kid's nose.

"I've got a nice hole card, Mr. McCarthy. Again, please."

"Saving 'em for myself, Woodpecker."

The smile was all gone out of Ballhooter. He had his cards up close.

"Opening for—five little ones," says Jack Barnes, laughing back of his lip and letting five matches trickle out of his fingers.

"And five, Woodpecker. That makes ten across your bill, coming to you."

"Just a thoughtless young devil, that's me, Mr. McCarthy. You're upped five. Fifteen's now the count."

"And five makes it twenty. Calling me, Woodpecker?"

Jack Barnes wiped a drop of blood from the tip of his nose. He took another look at his hole card and wiped his nose again.

"Shall we make it ten more, Mr. McCarthy?"

Ballhooter's eyes blasted into Jack Barnes, but they bounced right off. You could see the heave of his chest as his breath whistled through his teeth, his thick forefinger braced up the back of cards.

"Make it fifty," says Balhooter, licking his lip. "It's twenty-five now, Woodpecker. If you lose the fifty, you'll be wearing two noses, twice as big as the one you've got now."

"Make it fifty," says Jack Barnes, and turns up his hole card. "Fours, wired back to back, Mr. McCarthy. I was bluffing. Now show me a full house."

Fingers all wooden joints, Ballhooter turns up his hole card. He had nothing —just bluffing cold. Figured the sting of his first five cuts at Jack's nose would scare the kid out.

"Ready, Woodpecker. Take your fifty." Ballhooter said that with his own cards covering his eye. You could see the cords in his neck stiffen for the kid's first blow.

But Jack Barnes just yawned and tossed down his head. "Here, fan yourself, Mr. McCarthy! I'm going to get some sleep."

With that he walks out on us. Every pair of eyes in the place was on the door. Nobody dared look at Ballhooter.

It was wicked the way that kid had cut Ballhooter to pieces right in front of our eyes. Not a man of us but what right then knew Ballhooter was blind, fighting mad inside, and getting worse every second because he didn't know what to do or say.

"What the hell you grinning at?" he whipped out at Jack Barnes's swamper.

"At you, you big blow-gut!" he got right back in his teeth.

Ballhooter thought he was back on his own ground again. He started to roll up his sleeves, eyeing the swamper up and down like the man was a sapling he could cut down with one blow. But more of Jack's crew moved in. The rest of us backed off. The party was no skin off our noses.

"Ten to one, is it?" Ballhooter jeered at Jack's crew.

"You sure guessed right, once in your life, Ballhooter," the swamper told him.

No, the toughest man that ever lived can't manhandle ten loggers like those men that were crowding Ballhooter. And it's no disgrace to his courage that he backed water. But when he went out of the cook shanty he went out a man no better than the rest of us. Just a man.

TROUBLE like that, of course, couldn't be kept from a smart woods boss like Dan Forbes. He didn't call us together and give us any sermon about forgiving our enemies and working together in peace and harmony. No, he just got out the old salt back and sprinkled a pinch here and there on the sore spots, keeping Ballhooter just below the blazing point by yapping at him how Jack Barnes's crew were coming closer every day to his log footage.

"Snap it up, Ballhooter," the woods boss told him. "Young Barnes, with a crew of culls and scrubs, came within a thousand feet of your cutting yesterday."

Along toward the first hint of the spring thaw the pressure got so bad we were getting sick of it. Ballhooter drove his crew, with his fist swinging for every man that so much as straightened up from pulling a crosscut saw to rub his back. And while that was going on Jack Barnes was bringing his crew into camp at night, singing some crazy little marching song, with different verses made up by the Poles and Finns and Swedes in his gang.

The trouble was, none of the rest of us could work off our feelings on any of Jack's crew; because if you took a swing at one of them the whole bunch piled on. Whether we liked it or not, the rest of us stayed pretty much to Ballhooter's end of the bunkhouse.

All the time Ballhooter was getting nastier. It was drive, drive, drive with him from daylight to dark. You could see him sitting on his bunk, one big shoe still in his hand and glaring at Jack Barnes's back down there at the other end.

We thought the blow-up was coming when one night Ballhooter came in and hung his wet mackinaw over Jack Barnes's ax that was hanging from a nail to keep the helve straight. Jack was touchy about that ax of his. No different, maybe, than any of the rest of us at that. But he came up short when he saw Ballhooter's mackinaw steaming on the wall.

One swoop and he tossed it on top the big heating stove. There was a hiss of steam and the smell of scorched wool before Ballhooter could snatch it off. It looked like the battle between those two was on right then.

The odds favored Ballhooter, as any lighter good man knows from experience when he ties into thirty pounds more man than he is. The little man wins in the story book, maybe; but in the woods things like that don't happen so often.

Right when Ballhooter starts crowd-

ing over Jack's way, Dan Forbes shoves his head in the door and yells. "Everybody outside and get on the rollways! She's thawing fast."

A WARM rain was punching holes in the snow when we turned out and headed for the rollway, up on the high bank overlooking Big Rifle River. It was a weird sight, oil flambeaux spiked to the trees along the bank and throwing a yellow light over the high piles of logs stacked on the rollway. And the snow kicked the light back into the logger's faces. Snow everywhere, but melting fast. You could hear the ice down in the river grinding and groaning, like any minute the ice was going out.

First there was the job of shoveling off three feet of wet snow from the log piles. Under that the top tiers of logs were all frozen together. They had to be loosened, so when the key logs down below were blasted away with dynamite every stick on the rollway would go into the river. Ticklish work. Everything has to be just so or the pile hangs on the river bank and all hell can't budge a winter's cut of timber until the high water is gone.

By daylight we had the snow cleared. You took your life in your hands every step, up there a hundred feet above the river, with snow balling up on the soles of your calked logger's boots. Every step you took on the wet ice-coated logs was worse than walking a tight rope with your head in a bucket.

Dan Forbes slid down the bank to the river and punched a hole with his peavey to see how fast the rain was rotting the ice.

"The river's got the jump on us," he said to Ballhooter when he climbed back up again. "Ice will be moving any time now. Get your crew on top and break loose. Pitch the sticks out onto the ice."

Ever try to loosen logs that have been frozen into one solid mass all winter? Quarrying granite is no worse, because you can use steel drills and dynamite. But with logs they got to come out clean—no wasting timber after good money has been spent getting it to the rollway.

"You—you—and you," Ballhooter said to some of his gang. "Leg it for camp and grab every ax you find. We're going to chop these sticks free."

Jack Barnes didn't hear that, because just then he was bringing up his crew from clearing snow at the upstream end of the rollway.

"How does she look above?" Dan Forbes asked him.

"Sticks aren't frozen as bad as down here," Jack reported. "But the piles are shaky. You could feel it under your feet. Two feet of fast water, with heavy ice pans cutting at the bank, and those sticks up yonder will spill into the river."

Dan Forbes didn't say anything, but it was written plain on his face what he was thinking as he looked down into the gorge and stared at the rain-slicked ice that was already showing black cracks. He was seeing the whole winter cut of camp seven jammed down there.

"You'd better dynamite this pile, Dan," said Jack Barnes.

Dan Forbes shook his head. "I'm right up against my cost estimate now. Can't afford to lose the timber. We'll try chopping it out first."

About that time Ballhooter's men came back from camp, loaded down with axes and pry poles. Ballhooter went through the axes until he got one that seemed to please him and climbed up the pile. Jack Barnes was the next man up.

The two of them started at opposite ends of the top log and worked toward each other, chopping the ice free on either side of the log. Then they both backed up and set their peavey hooks into the log.

"Together with me, Woodpecker,"

grunted Ballhooter, all set with his big shoulders under the peavey handle. "Heave—!"

Over went the log into the river, landing flush and smashing a long narrow hole in the rotten ice. Neither man stopped to look. They swung their axes like machines. Over went another log.

"More beef next time, Woodpecker!" Ballhooter laughed from the other end of the next log.

The pace they were setting was man-killing.

Over went another log. Jack Barnes stopped to shuck out of his mackinaw and heave it down off the pile. They went at it again, at the same pace, logs booming onto the rotten ice below and smashing it into the black river underneath.

Next, Ballhooter shucked out of his mackinaw. He had kept it on just to show the boys down below that he could stand the boiling heat of it longer than Jack Barnes had.

For just that long, Jack had time to see that the ax Ballhooter had been swinging was his.

"Trade me axes," he said to Ballhooter. "That's mine you've got."

Ballhooter grinned all over his face. "Some other time, Woodpecker. Right now I got use for it."

He started chopping another log free of the ice, getting his end free before Jack Barnes met him at the middle of of it. The log was lying on the overhang of the pile; and the minute Ballhooter saw it move with the last blow of his ax, he didn't wait for Jack Barnes to get a purchase with a peavey hook. He gave his ax helve a side twist and shot the log down into the gorge.

For a minute, it looked like, Jack Barnes stopped breathing over seeing his pet ax abused that way. All tight around the jaws, he reached out and said to Ballhooter:

"If anybody spoils that ax, it's going to be me. Hand it over!"

Without taking his grin off Jack, Ballhooter half turned and sunk the ax blade into a log behind him. "There she is, Woodpecker. Come and take her if you're man enough!"

Ballhooter boomed that loud enough for every man on the rollway to hear. It was a showdown, high up there on those ice coated logs, where the difference in weight between the two men didn't mean a thing. Just one light tap on a man's jaw at the right time, when his feet were slipping on the ice, and over backwards he'd go—a hundred feet headlong into floating logs and scrambled ice in the black river below.

For the space of two slow heaves of his chest Jack Barnes stood spraddle-legged on the same two logs Ballhooter was footing. His face was dirty white, like the wet snow down-wind of the cookhouse smoke pipe.

Then, slow-like, Jack began kicking the balled snow from between the steel calks in the soles and heels of his river driver's shoes. His belt came up a notch, with a hard slap of his bare hand against the buckle. Ballhooter just stood there grinning—waiting for the fight to come to him.

But it didn't. Jack Barnes pointed down at the river and said, "The ice is moving, Mr. McCarthy. And we've still got one hell of a pile of sticks to break loose. I'll have my fun of smashing that smile off your face later." And with that he picked up the company ax he'd been using and was back chopping clear the next log.

Well, from down below it looked plain as a pike pole that all this randy dandy Jack Barnes had been pulling on Ballhooter didn't have enough cold nerve behind it to stand up and fight.

And the way Ballhooter was using Jack's pet ax—slamming it deep between two logs and flipping one out with a heave gainst the helve of it—showed he was thinking the same thing. And every time he gave Jack's ax some extra

wicked punishment, he'd look over at Jack and laugh.

Those two were kicking logs off so fast that Dan Forbes climbed up and took a look for himself.

"Off the pile, both of you!" he orders. "Time to dynamite out the key log and let her spill into the river." He jammed a hard look, first into Ballhooter and then into Jack. "And you two stay away from each other till the drive's finished. Understand?"

Ballhooter came down last, slapping Jack's ax flatways against the frozen logs as he came. Grinning big, too, and with a wink all round for his own crew when he hit the river bank again.

And while we were waiting for Dan Forbes to set the dynamite charge under the pile, Ballhooter got himself some extra fun. He'd smack Jack's ax into a stump and then pretend to forget it and walk off a little ways from it. Sure as he did that Jack Barnes would start drifting over to where his ax was. Not direct, or anything like that, but sort of like he was looking for something else.

Ballhooter would let him get just so near and then he'd reach out and jerk the ax out of the stump or out of the wet snow where he'd dropped it.

"Put salt on its tail, Woodpecker!" one of Ballhooter's swampers yelled when Jack started easing over to his ax once more.

There was a flash of red back of Jack's ears and the skin over his knuckles turned blue-white. The swamper moved back into the crowd that was waiting for Dan Forbes to touch off the dynamite charge.

THERE wasn't much of a report when the shot exploded. And for long enough to give a man time to watch the top log on the pile and begin to wonder if Dan Forbes hadn't been too skimpy with his dynamite, nothing happened.

Then the logs started going, first with a cracking noise way down in the pile, a noise which slowly grew louder. The top half of the pile on the rollway dropped off the skyline, and the roar of it hitting the ice down in the gorge rolled up and down the river until it chased itself off in a rumbling whisper.

But less than a third of the pile had gone. Dan Forbes walked around to the downstream end and took a look up at the big sticks still hanging on the bank.

"You'd never believe they'd hang like that straight up and down," he kept saying to himself. "They just can't, but they're doing it."

Jack Barnes, standing right behind him, heaved a chunk at the bottom log of the pile and said, "Two more sticks of dynamite under there and she'll come down flying."

As though he were getting his answer right then, a big stick broke loose, high up on the sheer face of the pile, and smashed straight down, right where a man would have been standing if he had been trying to set a dynamite charge.

Dan Forbes shook his head.

"Should 've triple-shot her," he said a couple of times to himself. "What's wasting a couple more thousand log feet at a time like this?"

Worst of all, the logs that had spilled off the rollway hadn't rolled clear out onto the ice like they should have. That was because the pile behind them hadn't followed up to keep them moving. All crazy were those sticks, some up-ended and criss-crossed. The makings of the wildest log jam in the history of Big Rifle River was there if ever the upstream piles of logs on the rollway started coming down before this mess was cleaned up.

But loggers don't stand around sucking a candy cane while the spring thaw is on and the river is making depth, three to six inches an hour. Besides, the sun had split through the clouds and was working on the sheer face of the pile. Every once in so often the sun

would melt loose another log and it would come booming down, adding more confusion below.

"We'll have to dry pick her, boys," says Dan Forbes, swinging an arm at the tumble of sticks sprawled out over the ice. "Grab your peavies, but keep an eye peeled for that stuff hanging up on the bank."

Ballhooter was first man out on the jam, skipping from one log to another and balancing himself on a teetering stick with the help of Jack Barnes's ax. And Jack was right on his heels, handling a heavy peavey like it was a play actor's walking cane.

"Here's the heart of it!" yells Ballhooter back over his shoulder and begins swinging his ax on a big log that had jammed straight up in the mud close to shore. The rest of the pile that had come down was jammed against it till there was what we call in the woods a wigwam—looked same as an Indian's tent, only a dozen times bigger.

"Come outta there, you split-brained loon!" Dan Forbes roars the minute he sees what Ballhooter is up to.

Ballhooter just laughs back: "Sure! In about five minutes—with the whole pile chasing me!"

Nobody else followed Jack Barnes in there with Ballhooter. They couldn't if they wanted to, because Dan Forbes was swinging a peavey and promising to knock the first man who tried it clear up on the bank.

Jack took a purchase with his peavey on the next log behind the jammer Ballhooter was cutting out.

"Bring out your chip, clean," he grunts at Ballhooter. "You're missing the cut half your strokes."

"This damn ax helve is crooked," Ballhooter snarls back without looking to see who was riding him. "Can't lay the blade twice along the same line."

But he was throwing chips fast at that, and big ones. Then pretty soon the upper end of the log hanging over him started cracking.

Jack put all his power against his peavey handle and yelled at Ballhooter: "Jump when the next chip comes out!"

On the bank we could see Jack's eyes bulging and his mouth working. But there was no time for the sound of his words to reach us before the logs leaped right at both men. There was nothing to do but watch them start running out over the rotten ice, with logs bounding and rolling right on their heels—two, three, five logs leaping and diving one over the other, like they all wanted to be the first to mash Ballhooter and Jack Barnes under.

Once, Jack whirled and shoved his peavey under the end of a log that was almost on Ballhooter, who had sprawled on the ice. The peavey handle smashed like a match, but the log took a crazy hop and cleared Ballhooter by four feet.

Still dragging Jack's ax with him, Ballhooter dug his calks into the ice and tried to hurdle the next log. He didn't make it. And the next minute he was piled under.

Then the whole pan of ice, with the logs piled on it, broke loose from shore and swung out into the broken ice in mid-stream.

The rest of the loggers of camp seven couldn't do a thing to help, except wish that the ice would break and finish the job quick before Ballhooter had to do much suffering.

BALLHOOTER'S ax had come sliding ahead of him across the ice pan to Jack Barnes's feet. He picked it up and dived right into the pile of logs. He cut the top one in two, faster than any two-man cross-cut team at camp seven had ever sawed through a log. Down he dropped in the pile, till all that showed was his shoulders.

And square between his feet was Ballhooter, trapped under two crossed logs.

"Hurt bad?" he asked Ballhooter.

"Not a scratch!" Ballhooter grins

back. "Cut me out, Woodpecker, and we'll finish that fight we was making."

"Move your head another inch to the left," says Jack, wiping the slush from his ax helve for a good grip. "I'll need all the room I can get with this crooked ax, remember."

Ballhooter, trapped so he had to look straight up into Jack's face, couldn't even shake his head, he was wedged that close. But he still could grin. "Shave me once over light, Woodpecker. I got awful tender skin."

Water was up to Ballhooter's chest by then, and creeping higher as the ice pan bowed down in the middle under the weight of the logs.

Jack hadn't anything to say. He sighted down the crooked helve of his ax and made a couple of trial cuts to one side of Ballhooter's head, trying to judge the way the blade was throwing off the line he was used to seeing it hit.

"Can't drink the whole river, Woodpecker," says Ballhooter. "You'd better hurry."

The first blow of Jack's ax clipped a little piece of skin off Ballhooter's ear. He had to stop and wipe the sweat off his hands and try another trial stroke.

"It's no skin off your ear," Ballhooter growled up at him, still trying to grin. "Hop to it, Woodpecker."

There was no more blood in Jack's lips than in a hunk of salt pork when he swung his ax again. It landed true. He switched ends and swung again, putting everything into it there was in those wiry shoulders of his.

Finally out came a big chip, and Ballhooter could shift his head over to one side and give Jack more room to chop on the other side.

Every so often while Jack was chopping, the sun, beating on the side of the logs still frozen on the rollway, would melt loose another big stick and she'd come smashing into the river. And the wave from it would rock the ice pan and set the logs trapping Ballhooter to shifting.

Pretty soon Ballhooter said, "If I was a damn cat, I could crawl through any place I could stick my head. Water's up to my chin, Woodpecker. I'd rather take it between the eyes than drown slow."

He meant the blade of the ax flashing within inches of his head every time Jack swung. But Jack had his eyes locked on the cut he was making and never missed a stroke.

Up came his ax for another stroke. Right in mid-air it hung. And a split-second afterwards the crossed log holding Ballhooter snapped. The butt jumped like a bee-stung deer and flipped Jack Barnes end over end, out into the black water.

The whole pile of logs on the ice pan went crazy at the same time. A spout of water shot up as the ice split. And with it came Ballhooter, landing on his feet on a spinning log and riding it right off the ice pan and into the water.

Camp Seven yelled wild and loud. But a thousand men couldn't have made themselves heard; for the logs on the rollway were roaring into the river and the wash from it had already started the ice downstream.

Just for a flash Jack Barnes's head rolled up in the black water. He wasn't swimming. Didn't even grab for the butt of a log floating right beside him.

All that time Ballhooter was jumping from one log to another, looking along both sides of it for a sign of Jack. Then he caught just a glimpse of a white face as it was sucked under an ice pan.

Ballhooter dived under after him. On shore, waiting for Ballhooter's red head to show on the other side, Dan Forbes tore the ear flaps off his cap without noticing what he was doing.

Then up came Ballhooter, tugging and heaving, to drag something out from under the ice pan. He snapped one big arm over a log and kicked the edge of the ice with both feet.

Next thing anybody knew, Ballhooter hoisted Jack's head and shoulders out of the water and over the log.

A long heave of a rope tied to a chunk pulled Ballhooter and Jack Barnes to shore. The cook was right there with a couple of blankets and a can of hot coffee.

After a couple of swigs, Jack looked across the brim of his tin cup and smiled with one side of his mouth at the trickle of blood running down from Ballhooter's chipped ear.

"Didn't expect my pay so quick for that bum shave I gave you, Ballhooter. Thanks a couple of times."

Maybe Jack was still feeling sort of queer about finding dry ground under his feet again. Then maybe he was only trying to make it easy for Ballhooter, who was having a tough time saying what he had on his mind in front of the whole woods crew of camp seven. Anyhow, Jack hunched the blanket a little closer over his wet shoulders and started for the bunkhouse and a change of clothes.

He took just about three steps when one of Ballhooter's swampers broke out in a fool grin and said, "You sure made a dipper-duck outta the Woodpecker, Ballhooter!"

If there was any laugh expected for that crack, it didn't come. Ballhooter hit the swamper one back-handed smash that knocked him into a wet snow bank.

"From now on that guy's name is Whitewater Jack," growls Ballhooter, looking around sort of wishful-like for somebody to say different.

But Dan Forbes pushed up front and jerked his thumb at the river. "You sightseers, grab your pikes and peavies. The spring drive is on!"

Well, as I said at the start-off, calling a logger a white water man leaves nothing more to be said.

LOST TRAILS

Any man who served with Ambulance Company No. 8, First Sanitary Train, First Division, A. E. F., write Archibald B. Oliver, 1747 Kentucky Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Charles W. Cantrell, 8231 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, wants word of Lieut. John Lewin and O'Neil Sievere.

Henry D. McGregor, 1708 Baker Avenue, Everett, Wash., wants to hear from an old shipmate, Gilford John Colvin, pharmacist's mate U.S.N. 1918-1919, later in Spokane, Wash.

Craig D. Hanson, who left Portland, Oregon, in 1935. Word wanted by G. P. Sylvester, 9535 S.E., Harold St., Portland, Oregon.

Where is Napier Mearns Crosett, his friend, J. Monte Dunstan, 51 South Beaver Street, York, Penn., queries.

Will "Sarge" Ralph Kingsley of Military Specialist Company, A.P.O. 727, write to "Kid" Collins Ewing, Odessa, Mo.

Captain Fred Ewing, Ex-Marine of Santa Domingo, please get in touch with Mrs. Sarah Olson of 2103 N.W., Hoyt St., Portland, Oregon, or Ethel Ewing, 136-19th St., E., Holland, Michigan.

Word wanted of Hamilton Redfield Norvell, sometimes called "Reddy" or "Curley," by his brother, Stevens Thompson Norvell, 4449 Howard Ave., Western Springs, Ill. Their father died on Dec. 30, 1936. Norvell lived in Cincinnati until 1932, went to Southern Ontario.

Eugene Barry in 1912 Chief Steward S. S. Byron, New York to S. America. Later heard of in New York and in the Middle West. His brother, William Barry, Tweenways, East End, Lymington, Hampshire, England, would welcome any news.

Richard H. Wells, Box 154, Clearwater, Florida, seeks news of his friend Lee (Bill) Elliott. Last heard from was in 1922, New York State.

Wm. P. Liebenrood, who worked on construction of Madera-Mamore Railway, last heard from at Puerto Veljo, Brazil, in 1914, believed leaving there for Cuba—please send word to G. C. Hagerman, 700 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles.

Mrs. Beatrice Stafford Grigsby, Box 203, Paintsville, Ky., wants word of her son, Jesse John Stafford Franklin, worked in Akron, Ohio, as John Stafford, for Goodyear Rubber Co., last heard of ten years ago.

Word wanted of Calvin William (Slim) Brown, once of Ranger, Texas. By Isaac Simmons, Bloom, Kansas.

Ralph Cornwall or Cornwell, formerly of "American Legion" in Canadian Army, transferred overseas to Intelligence service, reported caught in Germany and shot. Lately reported living in Texas or Oklahoma. Old buddy, Wayne G. Putnam, R.R. 8, Dayton, Ohio, would like word.

Tsu Wan calmly swept the gun from side to side.

THE LONE DEFENDER

By HAROLD Q. MASUR

TSU WAN sat on the floor of the little stone building and looked out through the jagged opening down the alleyway, which was flanked on both sides by the crumpling walls of what had once been some of the proudest buildings of Chapei.

Between his outstretched legs, stood the finest type of machine-gun that Western civilization could supply. An amazing weapon this, he reflected. The white men were so clever.

As he watched he saw the heads of two Japanese soldiers peering cautiously around the wall. Tsu Wan guided his weapon in the direction of the opening and waited. Accursed sons of Nippon. He would have spat, only his throat was dry and he had no water.

Gaining courage, the two Japanese intruders turned into the alley and walked warily towards the offending building. Tsu Wan breathed with difficulty while he waited. Then he exerted the slightest pressure for a brief instant upon the trigger.

Rat-a-tat-tat. The two Japs crumpled over each other to the ground. Tsu Wan grunted as he leaned over, recovered an empty shell.

Back of him, near the international settlement, he could hear the sharp

staccato of numerous rifles and the blasts of grenades. That, he thought, must be his own battalion, discreetly withdrawing to firmer positions well beyond the Soochow.

Tsu Wan stood almost as a lone defender. The Japanese had poured their forces into Chapei and were all around him. His only protection was the mass of masonry and debris that surrounded the narrow alleyway on all sides—that, and his small supply of amunition.

CAPTAIN OSHADA was filled with fury. It was bad enough that the Chinese should defy the Emperor's Army, but that a single Chinese, perhaps the only one remaining alive in all Chapei, should hide amidst the ruins and pepper his men was a situation which could not be tolerated.

He tried to explain to the colonel the difficulties in reaching this lone sniper and putting an end to his infamous activities. But the colonel was adamant. He refused to listen.

"Captain Oshada," he said, "you will kindly proceed at once and eliminate this dog. Use your own discretion and do whatever is necessary."

Captain Oshada smiled. He selected two picked companies from the battalion and proceeded in the direction of the alleyway. The men picked their steps carefully over the shambles, ever watchful for a possible sniper.

When they reached the entrance to the alley, the captain halted his men. There seemed to be but one way out. The men must be rushed up the passage and overpower the gunner. The stolid, expressionless faces of the little men were well masked; yet it was plain that none was anxious to be the first to enter the opening.

Tsu Wan, hearing the crunching steps of his enemy as they approached the alleyway, knew what was coming. A bead of perspiration traced a damp line along his olive cheek and disappeared under his chin. He prepared what remained of his ammunition so that he could reload as quickly as possible.

Out in the street, Captain Oshada ordered his men to fix bayonets and prepare to charge. At the command the Japanese infantrymen, screaming the cry of battle, poured into the passage.

Tsu Wan waited. He peered carefully over the ledge and then ducked his head quickly as a bullet whined above him and clicked with ugly ferocity against the wall. What a pity, he thought, to permit so many men to crowd into each other in such a narrow passage.

Tsu Wan held back till they reached the halfway mark; then he calmly pulled the trigger and swept the gun from side to side. Its sharp, steady beat sounded strangely like the wings of a bird he had once heard. Angry flashes of fire spluttered from the nozzle of the gun.

In the alley, the yells of the attackers suddenly changed to screams of pain and fear. The Japanese started to pile up like a barricade. The men who had been in the rear and who through no desire on their part were coming to the front were too terrified and stunned for the moment to take aim at the hole in the small building.

They turned tail, many of them dropping their weapons, the better to push their companions aside in their mad desire to escape from the passage and come out once again into the comparatively quiet streets of Chapei.

At the opening, Captain Oshada was screaming at the top of his lungs. No one knew, cared, or heard what he was saying. Captain Oshada's sould rankled within him.

He stamped his foot in anger and waved his pistol menacingly at the remainder of the two fine companies he had so proudly brought but a few short minutes before. Now that he had lost so many men, he dared not return to the

colonel without the leathery hide of this ill-begotten son of a Chinaman.

TSU WAN sighed. His ammunition was gone. The only sorrow he felt was that he could not destroy this entire half of a battalion. For himself he felt no regrets, for his was the philosophy which promised fine rewards in the kingdom soon to come for the patriotism and loyalty he had shown his homeland.

Lieutenant Mitsui approached Captain Oshada.

"I suggest," he said, "that we supply two squads of men with grenades, that as soon as they come within throwing distance or when the first shot is fired they are to cast the grenades into the opening."

The captain agreed. Lieutenant Mitsui tested Tsu Wan's alertness by placing the cap of one of his men upon the end of a bayonet and holding it into the entrance of the passage. Only silence greeted its appearance.

"He is very careful not to waste his ammunition," Captain Oshada said.

Lieutenant Mitsui looked hopeful. "Perhaps he has none."

The two squads were selected; together with Lieutenant Mitsui they entered the alleyway. Their progress was slow; despite their desire to annihilate Tsu Wan, they were desirous of remaining close to the exit as long as possible. They advanced to where their less fortunate companions grotesquely blocked their passage. Still there was no sign of activity from the building. At a command from the lieutenant they climbed gingerly over the bodies and advanced cautiously still further.

With the continued silence their courage increased. Soon they were within easy striking distance. Three of the men drew back their arms to hurl their deadly message into the gaping hole of the building. A sharp command from the lieutenant stopped them. He gestured silently to continue the journey.

The first soldier to stick his head inside the hole turned back to Lieutenant Mitsui and pointed.

The lieutenant advanced to the front of the group and stared inside. There against the wall, a thin smile on his lips, Tsu Wan stood looking back at him. Lieutenant Mitsui sent a man back for Captain Oshada. While he waited he examined his prisoner.

Could this miserable creature have been the cause of so much trouble?

He could see the same look in the eyes of the captain when he entered and saw Tsu Wan. Captain Oshada's hatred grew still greater. Without deigning to address Tsu Wan, he turned to Lieutenant Mitsui.

"We have two squads here," he said. "More than enough for a firing squad, but we'll use them both."

Tsu Wan was conveniently backed up against the wall. It was not even necessary to touch him. Captain Oshada commanded his men to line up eight deep in two rows. They did so. Tsu Wan swayed imperceptibly.

"Ready," Captain Oshada commanded sharply. The Japanese lifted their rifles. "Take aim," he continued. The men sighted along the barrels of their weapons. Then Captain Oshada paused for just a brief moment to permit himself the luxury of gloating.

In the instant before he ordered his men to fire, Tsu Wan fell forward upon his face and lay heaped upon the floor.

Captain Oshada said disgustedly, "The dog has fainted."

But a curious expression was on the face of Lieutenant Mitsui, who was bending over the body of Tsu Wan. He pointed to a small red spot near the center of the fallen man's back.

"The man has not fainted," he said. "He is dead. Can you not see that he has been wounded for some time? The poor devil was too weak to retreat with the rest of his army."

The Camp-Fire

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

A NEW writer comes into our Writers' Brigade—Caddo Cameron, with his novelette, "Six Feet and Horse-Faced." We like his hearty characters, and we hope to read more about them. Cameron gives us this story of himself:

For a good many years, I've been spreading my blankets with my feet to your fire; but I've made it a point to keep my eyes and ears open, and my mouth shut. You boys have ranged far and wide, and done things that I wouldn't dare to tackle; so I figure that a fellow like me is sure to get along better in such society by doing a heap of listening and mighty little talking.

However, you've got a perfect right to know something about any man who warms his shanks at your fire. There isn't much to tell, but here's what there is of it:

Back in 1888—sort of accidental-like, for the folks then lived in Texas—I was born a few miles north of the Texas Panhandle line in a sod house in what was then No-Man's Land, now the Panhandle of Oklahoma. In the buffalo days, long before I came on the scene—my dad and granddad were freighters out of the Kansas cow towns; but my earliest recollections have to do with the big pasture days in the high plains country where my folks ran cattle in a small way—for that region.

I grew up there, living the normal life of a boy who has to go to work early because his people are poor; and likewise, because they believe that hard work is good for a young'un. Until I was sixteen, the only means of transportation I'd ever known were wagons, buggies, and saddles; then I had a ride on "the cars" and I reckon the plush set my feet to itching.

At nineteen I left the plains and went to sea. After knocking around in the American tropics for a while, I lit on the Canal Zone. First as timekeeper, then strawboss and later foreman of a construction gang of West Indian negroes, I helped to build the re-location of the Panama Railroad. Afterwards, I drifted back to the States and went to railroading again.

Of course, I went back to the prairies off and on for a short spell. A fellow can't help doing that. My private pony had long since gone, but my dad always kept my old saddle. It felt mighty good—for a while; but age was the only cure for the itch my feet caught from the plush that time.

Into business and out of it, prosperous and broke more times than I care to mention—that sums up the balance of my life until I went to writing a few years ago.

We now live in Bandera, Texas—the locale of "Six Feet and Horse-Faced." We live here because we like the people and the country, and not because we have to. Some folks may call this away back in the backwoods, and maybe it is. We haven't got a railroad or an incorporated town in the county; but we've got more of the pioneer spirit than any place I know of. Take any Saturday afternoon and spend an hour on the street, and you'll see every character that appears in this story. Walk around a little and you'll see the C & H store building, Duffy's Hotel, and many other structures that went up in the 60's and 70's. Ride a few miles out of town in almost any direction, and you'll find old rock ranch houses with portholes built into them when Indian raiders came through Bandera Pass in the light of the moon. And whenever you leave a home or a store, you'll hear somebody say, "You-all come back soon."

You can't blame a fellow for trying to write stories about a country like this.

So 'long!

IT WILL be a surprise or shock to many of our comrades to find in our

pages an article about Dr. Cook, even an article restrained in tone. So, to tell the truth, is it a shock to the editorial staff.

A few months ago a manuscript from Ted Leitzell, who was then unknown to us, arrived unsought in the mail, as many manuscripts arrive each day, and was read in the regular order. The manuscript was an argument of the claims of Dr. Cook against the claims of Admiral Peary, and it upheld Dr. Cook. It went back. We felt, as others do, that Peary discovered the North Pole, and Cook is a classic imposter.

In reading the article before we turned it down we were surprised by some things that either we had not realized or had forgotten—Cook had spent considerable time in the Arctic and also in the Antarctic. Imposter that he was, he had also a worthy record as an explorer.

Mr. Leitzell is ardent on his subject. Correspondence followed. Leaving aside Polar controversy, would we consider printing an article on the undisputed accomplishments of Cook, provided they were sufficiently interesting as adventures? This seemed fair, and it still does. With some revisions, that is the manuscript that appears in this issue.

It was not possible for the author to avoid entirely reference to the Polar dispute, and in deciding whether to print the story we have not been able, as we had hoped, to keep from getting tangled in it ourselves.

Lest any comrade begin to snort at this point, as I did when the Cook manuscript arrived, let me say that I am not working up to a defense of Cook's claims that he discovered the North Pole, because nothing I have read inclines me to believe that he did.

But even to publish the piece in this issue required me to know more about Polar exploration than that Peary discovered the Pole and Cook was a fakir. I drew out of the library in a small city near New York the books on Admiral Peary and Doctor Cook.

I want to review some of the points of a book that impressed me strongly—"Robert Edwin Peary, a Record of His Explorations, 1886—1909," by J. Gordon Hayes. The author is an Englishman, a member of the Manchester Geographical Society, and the book was published by the house of Grant Richards and Humphrey Toulmin, London, in 1929. So far I do not find the book has also been published by an American publisher. The author has also written on Antarctic exploration.

In the following paragraphs, those enclosed by parenthesis are my own observations and impressions. The rest of the matter is gathered direct from this book, as accurately as I can take it off in a review.

Robert Edwin Peary was born in Pennsylvania in 1856 of French descent. The name was originally Pierre. In 1880 he wrote a letter to his mother saying: "I shall not be satisfied that I have done my best until my name is known from one end of the world to the other." In 1881 he joined the civil engineering corps of the U. S. Navy and worked on the Nicaraguan Canal. In 1886 he made his first expedition to Greenland.

Peary was not a naval officer except later in an honorary sense, but was a civil engineering assistant and draftsman in naval dockyards, and never served with the Navy at sea. He never received special training in science and navigation.

Peary's first trip to Greenland in 1886 was a short one, with a sortie on the inland ice-cap, and little of exploring value resulting, but it strengthened Peary's ambition and caused him to complain later of Dr. Nansen (exploring Greenland in 1888) that Nansen was "forestalling my work, which was a serious blow to me."

In 1892 Peary went again to North Greenland with five assistants, one of them being Dr. Cook. The plan was to

establish a base on the shore of western Greenland and from there cross the inland ice-cap to the unknown northeast coast. Though he did not fully succeed on this trip he penetrated unknown territory, mapped a large bay and an important channel and prepared to try again.

His next expedition to North Greenland, 1893—1895, failed through no fault of Peary's, by a series of misfortunes, blizzards, sickness among the dogs, and Peary's inability to re-locate a large *cache* he had made of stores. The stores has been set aside for a drive across the ice-cap in 1895, and lacking them Peary said, "The fates and all Hell are against me, but I'll conquer yet!" With an inferior supply of food for two months he went anyway, with two companions, feeding dogs to dogs, setting out with forty-two dogs and ending up with eleven after 500 miles. New land was sighted, but no mapping or geographical work was done because no time could be lost if they were to get back alive. With about two weeks' food and with now only nine dogs Peary started on the 500 mile return trip. The trip was a race with death. They covered the distance in twenty-four days, and one dog remained. It was from this expedition that Peary brought his meteorites, and they were the only fruit of the three years.

Peary then wrote his book, *Northward Over the Great Ice.*

With his fourth expedition—1898-1902—Peary began his efforts to reach the Pole. These were four heart-breaking years. He took the ship *Windward* to a distance 700 miles from the North Pole, and planned to work supplies forward on the ice to an advance base on the coast of the Arctic Ocean. The Fall of 1898 was spent in hunting for fresh meat and mapping parts of Grinnell Land near the ship, and the Polar drive began about the end of November. The first goal was Fort Conger, named by General Greely who had previously explored there. On his second attempt Peary reached Fort Conger on January 6, 1899, after a terrible trip on which the temperature dropped to 63° below, and blizzards almost caused the loss of the party, and Peary's toes were frostbitten and had to be amputated. His condition was so bad that he had to be lashed to his sled and driven back to his ship through weather as low as —65°. Indomitable, riding the sledge because his right foot had not healed, Peary returned again to Fort Conger and tried twice to go beyond it, but rough ice turned him back, and in May, still not able to travel afoot, Peary was returned again to the *Windward*, where he remained until early in 1900.

On April 15, 1900, he began his drive from Fort Conger for the Pole, and on his march discovered the northernmost point of Greenland. Here he had his first meeting with the Polar ice-pack. (The North Pole is on a great drifting ice field, reported to be probably the world's worst sledging surface.) In four days he was able to traverse only sixteen miles, so he turned back to explore eastward along the Greenland coast, discovering new land. He returned to Fort Conger in June and the next ten months are a blank in his record, except for hunting. In April, 1901, he started with only twelve dogs and sufficient supplies for only one-fourth of the distance to the Pole, over the sea ice-pack again, and turned back after 50 miles to his ship, where he stayed from May 1901 to March 1902. He made a final attempt on the Pole. Again he met terrible conditions on the ice-pack, with high pressure ridges thrown up by vast floes meeting and grinding together, open leads of water in the ice, etc., so that six weeks of the hardest effort advanced him only 87 geographical miles, or 100 statute miles, of northing.

(A geographical mile is one minute of latitude, and is the measure used by explorers. Thus, from 48 degrees North to

49 degrees North is 60 minutes, or geographical miles, or (on the sea) sixty knots or nautical miles. The measure is 6080 feet against our statute mile of 5280 feet.)

Peary turned back in April 1902 and his fourth expedition was over. In the words of his friend and biographer Commander Fitzhugh Green (*Peary, the Man Who Refused to Fail*) Peary returned in 1902 to his naval dockyard work as a "faded romance, a broken bubble, and an exploded theory . . . of course, he had failed." But Peary refused to fail. He raised $100,000 for a new ship, the *Roosevelt*, and in July 1905 he sailed on what he thought was his last expedition. He was fifty years old.

This time he planned to drive from the north coast of Grant Land, from which the Pole is 450 miles in a straight line. The drive began in February, 1906, when five white men, twenty-one Eskimos, Peary's Negro servant, Henson, and one hundred and twenty dogs set out for the Pole.

In his announced plans he hoped to make an average travel of ten miles a day.

Because of the drift, east or west, of the Polar ice-pack, records show Polar explorers have had to allow twenty-five to forty per cent of walking distance for this deviation, so that it is necessary to march ten miles on a tangent to make good seven or eight miles of northing. Peary allowed twenty-five per cent.

(The matter of deviation because of currents is a familiar problem in navigation, and will be apparent to any landsman who recalls trying to swim directly across a swift-running stream —you can do it only by swimming for a point upstream. The same applies to making good on distance north when marching on an ice field that is drifting east or west; a man has to walk toward west or east of north, in order to make good on a straight line of northing.)

The plan was that pioneers, led by Captain Bob Bartlett, should break trail for Peary to the point where they would turn back and Peary would go on for the Pole. Peary had made it plain that no white man was to share with him the honor of reaching the Pole. The party, with food for one hundred days, was able to make a speed of less than half what Peary had hoped. In five weeks only one third of the distance to the Pole had been covered and the Pole was out of the question. One-third of the total time allowed had been used in going one-sixth of the distance. Leaving Bartlett, Peary set out on the trip which resulted in his book, *Nearest the Pole*. The previous record North was 86° 34′ N, attained by Commander Cagni of the Duke of the Abruzzi's expedition in 1900. Peary left Bartlett at Storm Camp at 85° 12′ and returned to tell Bartlett he had reached 87° 6′, beating Cagni's record.

Peary's account of the days between leaving Bartlett and returning to him again is vague, with days omitted, no distances given for other days, etc., but the distances between the latitudes show that after leaving Bartlett he must have traveled two and one-half times faster than Bartlett, who was twenty years younger and a stronger man, had been able to travel up to that point.

Checking on this trip is extremely difficult, because although up to the point of leaving Bartlett, Peary gives a good account of their movements and dates, his record carries on from that point in these terms: "The third march from Storm Camp," "The second march south of the scar," "The next march after we emerged from the southern edge of the zone of shattered ice," "The next march after sighting the land," "The first march from the musk oxen," "each day," "every march," "several days," "next march," until he says, "I quote from my journal of the next day," at which point he has not mentioned a date

for a month. Even the date of his return to the *Roosevelt* and Bartlett is not given, but several days later his records begin to use dates again, on June second. The last previous date Peary has given is April 21. The writer points out paradoxes such as making only 3 miles per day with Bartlett and 30 miles per day after leaving him, the same dogs "giving out under the heart-breaking pace" on 8-mile days, and adduces circumstantial evidence too complicated to give here. He concludes Peary did not beat Cagni's record.

On June second Peary was starting west along Grant Land to fill in an unknown gap between the explorations of Aldrich and Sverdrup.

Peary writes on June 17th, "A day's march beyond Aldrich's farthest and what I saw before me in all its splendid sunlit savageness was *mine,* (his italics), mine by right of discovery, to be credited to me and associated with my name generations after I have ceased to be."

On June 18th he writes, "In today's march we passed the mouth of a black precipitous-walled bay, some eight to ten miles wide at its mouth, with apparently several interior ramifications. *Mine!*"

Peary comes then into the region where Captain Sverdrup, in 1889-1902, had explored and mapped territory then unknown. Peary had succeeded in filling the gap left between Aldrich and Sverdrup.

Peary on June 24, 1906, ascended a high cape, naming it Cape Colgate. He writes, "From the summit . . . the view was more than interesting. East lay the wide white zone of the icefoot; west, the unbroken surface of Nansen Strait, and beyond it the northern point of that western land which I saw from the heights of the Ellesmere Land ice-cap in July 1898, and named Jesup Land, though Sverdrup has later given it the name of Heiberger Land. South, over and beyond some intervening mountains and valleys, lay the southern reaches of Nansen Strait. North stretched the well-known rugged surface of the Polar pack, and northwest it was with a thrill that my glasses revealed the faint white summits of a distant land."

That land was Crocker Land, which has since been proved non-existent by Peary's friend MacMillan and others.

Later maps and observations show that Peary was in error on his directions here—the icefoot he describes as lying east being in reality north, Axel Heiberg Land and Nansen Strait, which he describes in the west, being south.

(Actual direction in these regions seems to be a matter of fine astronomical and mathematical calculations, the compass being practically useless. There is a vast area over which the compass merely points into the ground. I had not realized that the North Pole, which explorers have sought, is the true north or geographical Pole, not the magnetic north pole, which is a big undefined area. This is made clearer by remembering that all navigation charts show both true north, and magnetic north, (a variable element) and navigators use true north after making their calculations for the error of the compass. Meridians run true north and the North Pole is where they cross.)

In that paragraph quoted above, in which Peary's directions are wrong, he discovers Crocker Land (non-existent) and lays claim to having previously discovered Axel Heiberg Land in July 1898.

The paragraph is taken from page 202 in Peary's book *Nearest the Pole.* In the same book, on page 296, Peary writes "The *Windward* sailed from New York on the fourth of July 1898 and on the seventh I went on board the *Hope* at Sydney C. B." On the next page he tells of both ships arriving in the Greenland region on August thirteenth. Peary was thus on the sea in July, 1898, which destroys his claim to the Axel Heiberg

Land which had been visited, charted, and named by the Norwegian expedition of Sverdrup, 1900-1902.

Peary writes of leaving Axel Heiberg Land on July first, 1906. "I must confess to a feeling of sadness and regret at leaving . . . the deer and the hare feeding . . . the call of the birds and the sound of running water . . . but I, to whom it belongs, should never see it again."

The author contends that Peary was trying to jump Sverdrup's discovery of Heiberg Land.

Peary returned to the United States in 1906.

In the year the Danmark Expedition established itself on the east coast of Greenland, and the Commander, Erichsen, led a party across the ice cap to Peary's Independence Bay, (non-existent) and was never seen again. Authorities have blamed Peary's erroneous map for the loss of the party.

Between 1909 and 1912 a Norwegian, Captain Mikkelsen, searched in this region for the lost party to obtain Erichsen's diary. He did not find the diary nor the remains of the party, but he found a long message from the lost explorer containing these words, "We drove westward with twenty-three dogs until the first of June, reaching Peary's Cape Glacer and discovered that the Peary Channel *does not exist,* (his italics) Navy Cliff being connected by land with Heilbrin Land." This party was nearly lost because it had planned a return through the non-existent Peary Channel.

In 1915, the U. S. Government announced that Peary's charts were "officially cancelled and withdrawn" on the ground that they "erroneously show waterways that do not exist and lands that are really deep sea, while lands that do exist are omitted altogether."

On the record thus far, the author concludes that Peary was a driving, enthusiastic, but unreliable and inaccurate explorer.

Peary wrote *Nearest the Pole,* and left for the Arctic in July 1908 on his final expedition. He used the same base and the same methods as in 1906, Bartlett pioneering the trail for him up to the point where Peary would leave Bartlett and proceed for the Pole. Their last camp together was at 87° 47′ N, and Peary went on from there with his negro servant and four Eskimos, on April 2, 1909.

(The author gives sledging tables and schedules on this and others of Peary's trips, made up from Peary's reports. He gives both geographical and statute miles, but in the account of the next eight days we shall use statute miles as they are the ones we are used to walking. Here is the Polar dash.)

Bartlett's Last Camp was at 87° 47′.

April 2, 1-2 a. m. Peary left for Pole. Bartlett had been dismissed April 1.

April 6, 10 a. m. Peary arrived at North Pole camp, Camp Jesup, at 89° 57′. (Three geographical miles from Pole.)

In the 30 hours between 10 a. m, April 6, and 4 p. m. April 7, Peary walked 41½ statute miles in straight lines around the Pole.

At 4 p. m April 7, Peary left the North Pole camp.

Evening of April 9 (time not specified) Peary arrived back at Bartlett's Last Camp.

(Bartlett was not there at that time, of course, as by arrangement he had started back for the ship. It must be remembered that the book takes for authority concerning Peary the writings of Peary himself, giving the exact references in footnotes. The author expresses high regard for Bartlett and questions nothing that happened in Bartlett's presence.)

Leaving aside consideration of the great speed of the march toward the Pole from the Last Camp, compared with speeds of the party up to the be-

ginning of that march, we shall look at the writer's discussion of Peary's return from North Pole camp at 89° 57′ to Bartlett's Last Camp at 87° 47′. The distance between the two latitudes is 130 minutes, or geographical miles, or a bee-line distance of 150 statute miles. Peary describes it as "a glorious sprint," not giving distances in miles but in minutes. The bee-line distance assumes no deflection off the straight course because of pressure ridges, etc., which were conditions met up to the time of leaving Bartlett. The bee-line assumes also that the drift of the polar ice-cap stopped, because up to that time it had been necessary to march thirteen miles to make good ten miles of northing. If the same drift is assumed to have continued, the 150 miles of bee-line become 194 miles of marching.

The mileage, done in about 56 hours, must be added to the 41 miles Peary walked around the Pole in the preceding 30 hours, or a total of 191 miles in 86 hours if no allowance is made for deviation, a total of 235 miles if allowance is made.

The author points out that this was over the "roughest sledging surface in the world," and gives Peary's testimony that his sledges were not light, but loaded with food for 40 days.

To account for the full distance to the Pole and back in these eight days, the author points out that Peary had to average over fifty miles a day for the eight days. There are no ice-pack records half this fast. Bartlett's average northward to the Last Camp was about 16 miles per day, and his return from the Last Camp to the ship averaged somewhat under that. Peary was 53 and had lost his toes, and Bartlett was 33.

On the same two-day return dash from the Pole to the Last Camp, Peary reports he took one sounding of ocean depth, which indicates he met open water with its possibilities of delay, or chopped through the ice. (Elsewhere the author gives reports on thicknesses of the ice-pack up to 12 feet.)

Peary returned to Last Camp on the trail he had made to the Pole, and here also an attack is made. Citing observations of other explorers, and previous experiences of Peary, and giving a picture of the moving ice-pack faulting and shifting and rejoining ceaselessly, the author finds it incredible that such a long trail could have remained intact.

Bartlett left Peary on April 1 and arrived at the *Roosevelt* on April 24. Peary would have been at his ship on April 25 if he had not stopped for two days at Cape Columbia. (The author suggests he was afraid of overtaking Bartlett.) An odd calculation is presented here. If Peary had not stopped for two days at Cape Columbia, as he reports he did, and had not spent 30 hours at the Pole, as he says he did, he would have beaten Bartlett back to the ship. Bartlett's trip from the Last Camp to the ship was 380 miles in 24 days, and Peary's trip, adding the distance to the Pole, the walking around the Pole, and from the Pole back to Last Camp, was 400 miles longer than Bartlett's trip, accomplished in one more day than Bartlett used for 380 miles, or about 780 miles in 25 days. This extinguishes all other ice-pack records.

The author has begun his book with these words: "During the preparation of some sledging statistics I found that Admiral Peary held the world's record for speed. This would have been remarkable under any conditions, for he was fifty-three years old at the time, but what made this record almost, if not quite, incredible was that the conditions under which it was made were known to have been unfavorable for high speeds."

Much other evidence is presented, of which only a couple of instances can be cited. Peary fixed his position at 89° 57′ by a single latitude observation. The

author goes into records of South Pole exploration where two parties of white men succeeded in reaching that Pole, one being a group of five navigators, and the other a group of three, all taking many sights for both latitude and longitude to check each other, the leaders using this system of many observations because of the extreme difficulties of getting accurate sights in the region of the Pole.

As Peary's claim would seem to rest not only on unequalled sledging speeds but also a bee-line to the Pole, which Peary indicated he had taken, the author inquires how Peary knew he was taking such a direct path. Peary made no longitude sights after leaving Bartlett, and longitude sights seem required at frequent intervals to establish that one is following a meridian or true north line. Peary tells of using his compass to sight from one ice hump to another, and the author points out that the compass is useless for establishing directions in the far Polar regions.

In comparing sledging records of various explorers, the author demonstrates that Peary was not a champion sledger, all of his other fast performances except the unwitnessed Polar efforts having been eclipsed by other men.

The possibility that after Peary left Bartlett, the ice-pack became an easier sledging surface is met with a study of polar ice-pack conditions which seem to prevent such a possibility, and concludes with Admiral Byrd's observations that the ice-pack is everywhere the same jumbled upheaval, becoming, if anything, rougher around the Pole than elsewhere.

The author believes that Admiral Byrd was the first man to see the North Pole.

Although other great explorers have left their diaries and original journals to scientific societies for study, Peary seems to have left no original diaries nor journals. The written record of his achievements appears in the books he wrote, and in the minutes of the Congressional Record, and in the books that Bartlett and other men who accompanied Peary have written about the expeditions up to the point where Peary left them behind. The National Geographic Society seems to have tipped the scale in Peary's favor in the fierce controversy over the Pole. The Society is the publishing company which publishes the *National Geographic Magazine*. It had provided funds for Peary's expedition and on his return it announced that a subcommittee of three had examined Peary's original records and had unanimously concluded that he had reached the North Pole.

Peary's claims were later put before a Congressional Committee and excerpts from the hearings appear in this book.

(There are curious items in the minutes of this hearing, such as the chairman saying to a witness from the National Geographic Society, "Professor, for myself I could not comprehend how anybody would be so untruthful as to say that he reached the North Pole if he did not; but at the same time I wish you would state the observations that were made by Peary. You see, I do not know how they were made; I know nothing at all of astronomy, but I would like it to appear in the record the sort of an observation he made," etc.)

The Congressional Committee asked Peary for his original journal and Peary refused to turn it over, saying, "I do not care to leave it with the committee or anyone. I do not care to let it out of my possession; it never has been."

Where other Polar explorers have had the instruments with which they made their observations checked for accuracy on their return, the National Geographic Society subcommittee testified they had seen Peary's only at the Pennsylvania railway station at Washington where his trunks were opened.

The author seeks to point out that apparently some element of courtesy among fellow geographers impeded full scrutiny of Peary's claims by geographical societies in Europe, in deference to his claims having been apparently upheld by the official geographical organization of the United States. He attempts to show some misunderstanding in Europe as to the real nature of the National Geographic Society and points out that over there a geographical society is an official organization composed of qualified geographers, and the National Geographic Society in this country is not official and its membership is open to everyone who pays for a subscription to the magazine.

The book appears to be a thorough and logical study. It seems to add two and two to make a dumbfounding four.

As an explorer Peary seems to have made a minimum number of observations for his long period in the Arctic (a total of ten years) and a large percentage of incorrect ones, and we have his own words that so-called scientific observation meant nothing compared to the fame of reaching the Pole.

There was at the time a patriotic glow that the Pole had been discovered by an American after explorers of other nations had failed, and one has to wonder how much this national pride entered unconsciously into what findings there were.

The book gave me a certain distaste because at times the author appears to gloat over some of his arguments. The impression is that of a lawyer adding a sneer to a deadly chain of evidence, but it is not apparent that this affects the evidence itself, the evidence being Peary's own testimony.

The book seems to be well known among Polar students, although not to the general public for whom the newspapers settled this argument years ago, as it had been settled for myself.

The book gives only a page or so to Cook, dismissing his claim to have found the North Pole without going into detail, and saying merely that Cook took more observations than Peary and about half of his observations have been subsequently been checked by other explorers and found accurate.

The author concludes his book on Peary in these words:

"—bravery and strength have ever been the qualities most admired, and these Peary had to the full. His life was a battle in which he never faltered nor feared. He fought his nerve wracking fights in America and he measured his strength against the grim forces of nature in their most awful forms. Never did Peary flinch or show the want of courage. His spirit triumphed over all adversity, and his body conquered every obstacle—except the Polar pack."

I should like very much to know if this book has had a successful rebuttal, because I want to read such a book, for two reasons: one, to see if it may be established that Peary discovered the North Pole after all; and the second reason, an academic one, to see if an argument so apparently complete and logical can still be a false argument.

If this book has met no rebuttal as deadly as itself, where does that leave Cook?

I cannot see that it gives complete comfort to the Cook adherents. It puts Cook no nearer the Pole. But from another point of view, it may have importance when we remember that it is on the accusations of Peary and his believers that Cook has spent his life condemned in the American mind as an imposter.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere.

THE American Indians were natural colorists.

Request:—I am interested in Indian pottery and wondered if you could give me any information on the materials used for coloring, and also methods used in baking or firing.

There are some Indian mounds in this vicinity, but the pottery is all broken. The nearest Indians are about one hundred and fifty miles from here, but they no longer make pottery, and apparently have not done so for many years.

—Albert R. Taylor, Provo, Utah.

Reply by Mr. H. F. Robinson:—You ask whether I could give you any information about the coloring and firing of Indian pottery.

In the first place the color of the pot is governed by the clay used in its making. Should the clay that is at hand contain any iron, the pot will burn red. If it has little or no iron, it usually burns buff or cream colored.

The average pot usually contains only two or three colors—the base color, the black or brown of the figures painted on for decoration, and a white, that is usually for background, and a red. The white is usually a wash or slip of gypsum. As you know, gypsum heated becomes what is known as plaster of Paris, which is the basis of white plastered walls. Mix the plaster of Paris to a creamy consistency with water and apply it to the clay, and it will burn white. The red is hematite or oxide of iron which is ground and applied as a paint and burns red. The black is a vegetable usually. There is a flowering weed in this southwest country. I do not remember its scientific name, but it is commonly called "bee-weed"; grows two to four feet high and has a blue or lavender blossom. It is known in some sections as "ragged lady". An infusion of this is made, which, when boiled down, leaves a black or dark brown gummy substance. This applied as a paint burns to a good black, probably a true carbon.

Occasionally some other color was used. These pigments were obtained from many sources, usually mineral. In addition to the oxides of iron, the most common were carbonates of copper.

The pottery is burned in the open, no kilns being used. The fuel is usually manure, although I have known in a few cases where coal veins were exposed for the fuel. The object is to get an even heat with as little smoke as possible. The pottery, after being sun dried and decorated, was placed on the ground with spaces between the individual pieces and dried manure placed in and around each piece and the entire collection of pottery then covered with a mound of the manure.

This is fired and burns slowly with little flame and a great heat. It takes a number of hours to burn the pottery, and it must be cooled off gradually so that it does not crack.

IF you're handy with tools, buy your trailer in the shell.

Request:—I read the interesting bit on trailer faults in the October issue of *Adventure*.

I intend to have a trailer in the near future as I believe them to be a necessity in my line of work. I am a carpenter of nineteen years experience and have been wondering at the difference in cost of a factory model and one built by one's self. Needless to say, I shudder at some of the home made outfits one meets on the roads at times.

I've wondered if it is practical to build one, buying the essential parts from regular trailer manufacturers.

I am a hunter and fisherman and would encounter all sorts of conditions yet I do want a roomy job. About twenty feet.

Would you advise a stock job or a home manufactured one? I believe I can successfully cope with the building part of it.

What size car would you suggest for a twenty foot trailer? Would a Plymouth Sedan do?

Do you prefer electric brakes to cable operated?

—Afred L. Glew, Pulaski, N. Y.

Reply by Major C. G. Percival:—You would have no trouble building a good trailer with your mechanical and carpentering experience, but the meat of the whole thing lies in the plans you build from. I shall not advise you, as the market is full of them and the plans vary in ideas and desires.

The matter of length is very important. In fact, the first thing to consider. My advice is not over eighteen feet, as you can easily handle this length. Over eighteen feet you are going to get into all sorts of bugs and bother. If you want to go hunting and fishing eighteen feet is big enough; sixteen feet for such work would be even better.

If you decide to build a trailer, the freight and express on parts you have to buy would cost you more than you could buy a finished production-job. Frankly, my advice to you would be to buy what we call a "base" or a "shell" from some standardized manufacturer. Then you can have the fun of laying out the interior and putting in the equipment just as you desire it. That's job enough and you won't be worrying whether your trailer will stand up, not weave, etc. You can buy shells unlined and do this yourself and save quite a lot. The prices on these unlined jobs run as follows: Twelve foot—$210 unlined—if lined $30 more. To these prices add $50 for every two feet in length up to eighteen feet. All of these jobs will sleep four. The shorter the trailer, remember, the less it sways, the better it tows and the easier it hitches and unhitches—if you are going to places far off the main highways and over rough country roads, don't use over a fourteen footer—if on good roads then the eighteen foot.

Your Plymouth or any make of car will pull a trailer of eighteen feet and under.

Now that I have answered all your questions I still say don't attempt to build your own trailer—when the production manufacturers are offering you tried, tested and true jobs at such small sums that trying to build one seems almost a joke. On request I will send you address of firms who make good reasonable priced jobs cheaper than you could build them. Don't buy your coal by the basket. Buy it by the ton. The manufacturers buy by the carload.

There are four kinds of brakes: vacuum, hydraulic, mechanical and electric. I prefer the vacuum—they all function with satisfaction and are a valuable asset to jobs over fifteen hundred pounds.

Let's hear from you again—how many in family and if you are going to stay on the main highways or the "off roads." It makes a great deal of difference in the choice.

THE patina of romance on an American antique.

Request:—I have a wooden 'traveling' ink pot. Can't recognize the wood. The polished bottom is really quite beautiful and is inscribed, in ink, "Betty to Lois, June 10th, 1812 'To write of Victory'." A little premature, perhaps, but Betty's heart was in the right place.

It was apparently sawed out of a tree limb, and whatever treatment was used the very thick bark still adheres firmly, although the whole pot is very dry. The closure is a screw affair, apparently hand made and was very shaky, but I have managed to make it tight and waterproof with plastic wood. The screw is made of three Massachusetts Pine Tree shillings, undated, soldered together, with a half silver piece soldered on vertically to make a thumb piece. This piece is too worn to be identified. I say three Pine Tree shillings—the top and bottom ones certainly are; there is no way of identifying the middle piece.

It is a very competent screw job, and com-

pletely tight. On the bottom coin is what is apparently a lathe pit used to make the three assembled coins perfectly round. The thumb piece unquestionably covers a similar pit on the top coin. Male thread on the shillings, and female on the brass seating.

Can you suggest a way to treat this old wood so that the pot can actually be used as an ink well? I am confident that in its present condition it will let ink seep through and spoil the wood markings. Local experts have suggested boiling it in paraffin wax, but I think that will darken the golden base. Others say neatsfoot oil, but I'm sure I've heard somewhere that this should never be used on wood. Do you suppose linseed oil would do the trick?

I know this is not quite in your line, but I've not seen you stumped by more difficult questions.

Just as matter of interest, from what I have told you does it appear to you that this can possibly be an 1812 production? The metalwork seems rather perfect for so early a date.

When it is usable, by the way, it is to be used by quite the most charming Betty in California; to write I trust, of many victories.

—J. T. F., Brownsville, Texas.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—There are so many different kinds of inks, some of them more penetrating than others, and some able to dissolve or mingle with wood fillers, making stains, so you would better go slow with this traveling ink-pot of yours.

Your safest bet is to fit in a shatter-proof glass ink holder. You don't say how large the well is—(just the size of the screw-top, coin large?) There is an ink on the market that comes in a non-breakable rubber well, with an elastic plug on the screw-top and I think you could fill the well with a non-corrosive liner, insuring against stain.

There are varnishes, used on fish rods, decks, etc. A thin coat of this varnish would serve to "ink proof" the wood, serving as a "filler"—but you know what happens when you mix an iron ink with an acid or some other kind of ink; they neutralize and "fade" each other. Personally, I wouldn't advise trying to utilize an antique of this quality.

Ink would unquestionably work through the fibres of the wood. The process of "water-proofing" would be brushing thin fillers into the wood. Successive layers of liquid glass could be brushed on—but better talk with your local druggist about this preparation.

The best source of information is Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C. They have innumerable recipes for all purposes. And have made thousands of experiments proofing wooden containers in which liquids can be mailed, and no doubt among the discoveries has been a perfect wood filler to hold ink.

Neatsfoot oil wouldn't do at all; paraffin is a stiff petroleum grease and wouldn't serve. Linseed oil would likely work into the wood, when your need is a proof surface.

There is probably "history" connected with this; a letter to the Boston Public Library, Boston, Mass., might bring you some information. Some of those handicraft specialties like this, are priceless, now—and you may have such a piece. Henry Ford's Dearborn, Mich., Museum is ransacking the country for such things.

WHERE state and church are one.

Request:—I would like to secure all the information I can about a palace called *Potala*, which is situated in Lhasa, Tibet. Has any American been through this palace? Who built it?

Why do the Tibetans educate so many priests? Do these priests do any good for man, or do they stay in this temple until they die?

I understand there was a revolt there in 1922. What was that all about? Are there any books on this subject?

—J. H. Brown, Bellflower, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Seward S. Cramer:—Lhasa is a very difficult town to get into and an even harder place to get out of. There are a number of Europeans and Americans who have been there, but this does not include all those who make such a claim.

The Potala might be termed a sacred city within itself. It consists of dormitories for the lamas, temples, private compartments for the living buddha, and a few accommodations for guests. The Lhasa Potala (there are also Potalas at Jehol and in Chekiang) is the oldest and most famous. It was built in the XVth century by the then Dalai Lama.

The Tibetans are a very religious people and they feel that at least one member of each family must be a lama. These lamas take the place of Catholic priests and Jewish rabbis in other religions. Often lamas will stay within a temple until they die but this is not a rule.

The revolt of 1922 was purely a political move between followers of the Dalai and Tashi Lamas. I know of no book on the revolt. There are two books that have reference to the Potala that might interest you. They are both by Sven Hedin and are "Jehol" and "A Conquest of Tibet" and should be in your library.

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Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 7 West 8th Av., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Av., Binghamton, N. Y.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America, Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Police, City and State—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** — WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardoss," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Ugundu, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, 3482-16th Av., So., St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans.*—CAPT. BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care of *Adventure.* **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, 1641 Greenlawn Ave., Akron Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony. Orange River Colony, Natal Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Comp, Simi, Calif. **7** ★*Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. **8** ★*Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany.*—G. I. COLBURN, care of *Adventure.*

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md. **3** ★*South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, care of *Adventure.*

Greenland and Baffinland—*Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Canada, Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island.*—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, N. Y. **2** ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **3** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* **4** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M MOORE, *The Courier Advocate*, Trenton, Ont., Canada. **5** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks, Camping.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 1163 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **6** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. F. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune*, Minneapolis, Minn. **7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure.* **3** *New Mexico (Indians, etc.)*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado, Homesteading, etc.*—E. P. WELLS, Box 203, Prineville, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and border waters; touring fishing.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune*, Minneapolis, Minn. **3** *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.* **4** *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. **5** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All Territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Western Maine. All Territory west of Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. **3** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 29 Baldwin St., Almes Pt., West Haven, Conn. **4** *Adirondacks, New York.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **5** *New Jersey.*—F. H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J. **6** *West Va., Md., District of Columbia.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 842 Spring Ave., South Hills, Charleston, W. Va. **7** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.* **8** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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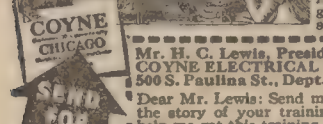

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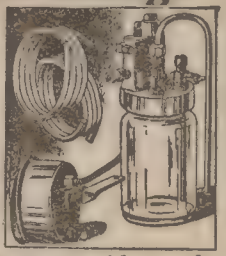

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30x5.00-20	2.85	1.15
5.25-17	2.90	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
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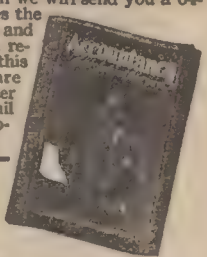

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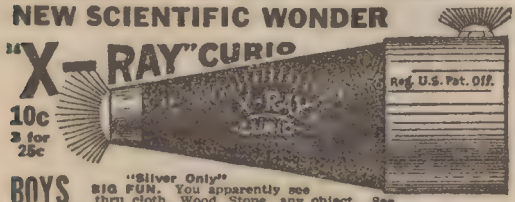

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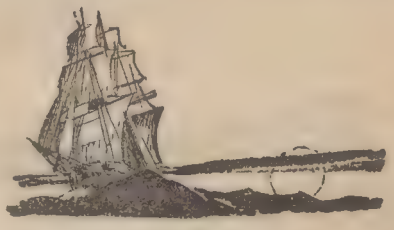

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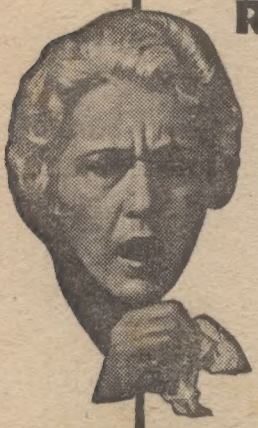

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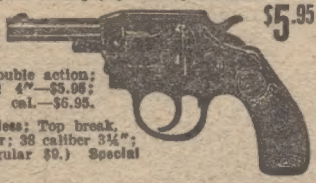

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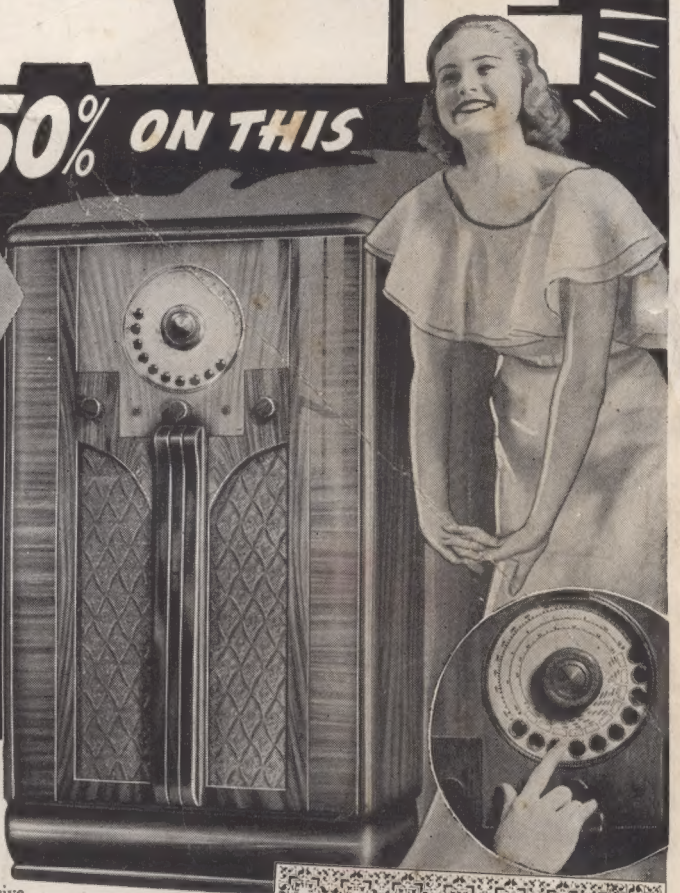

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